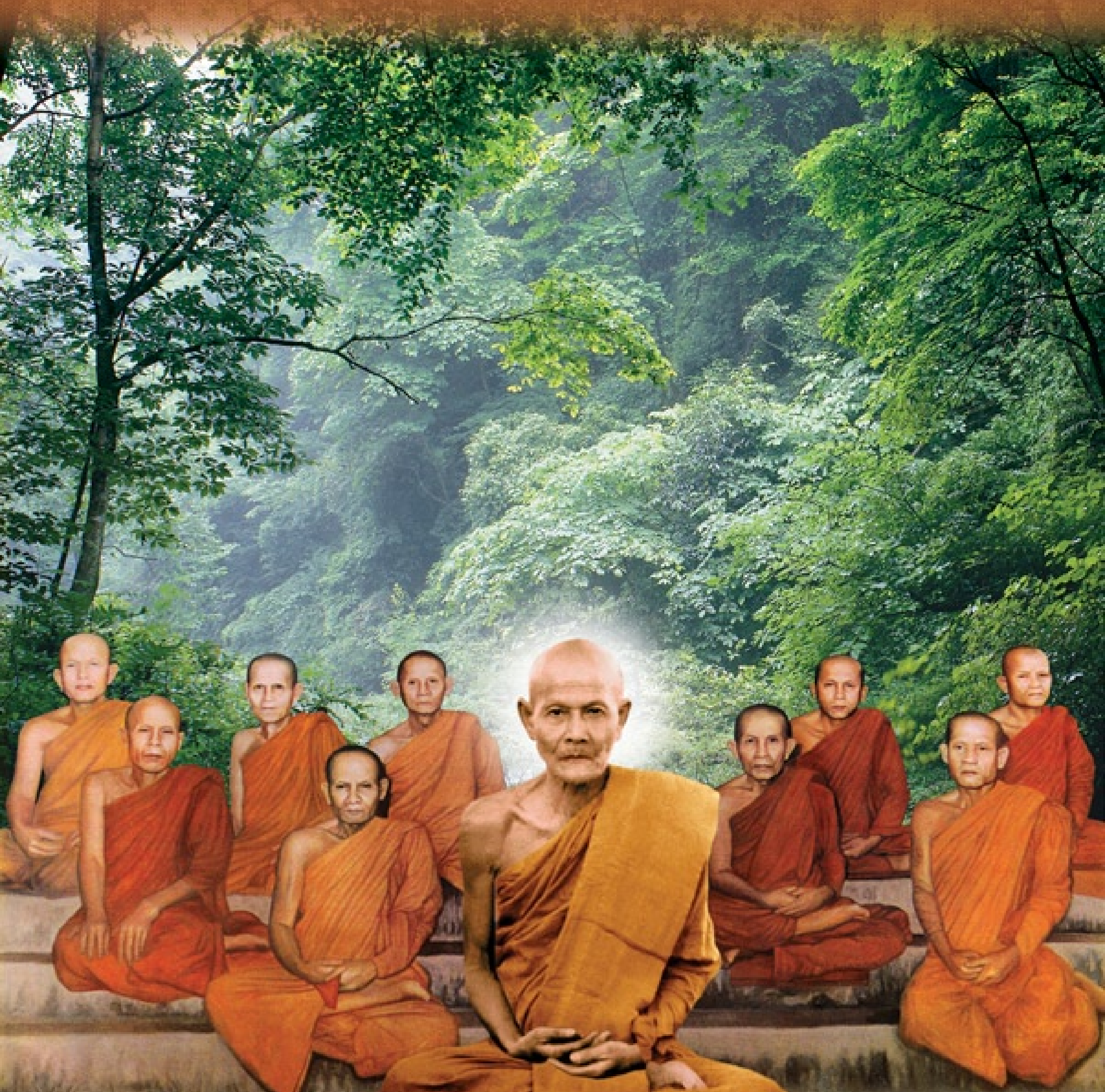
PAṬIPADĀ

Venerable Ācariya Mun's Path of Practice



by Ācariya Mahā Boowa Ñāṇasampanno

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Translated by Venerable Ācariya Paññāvaḍḍho

"The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts"
– The Buddha

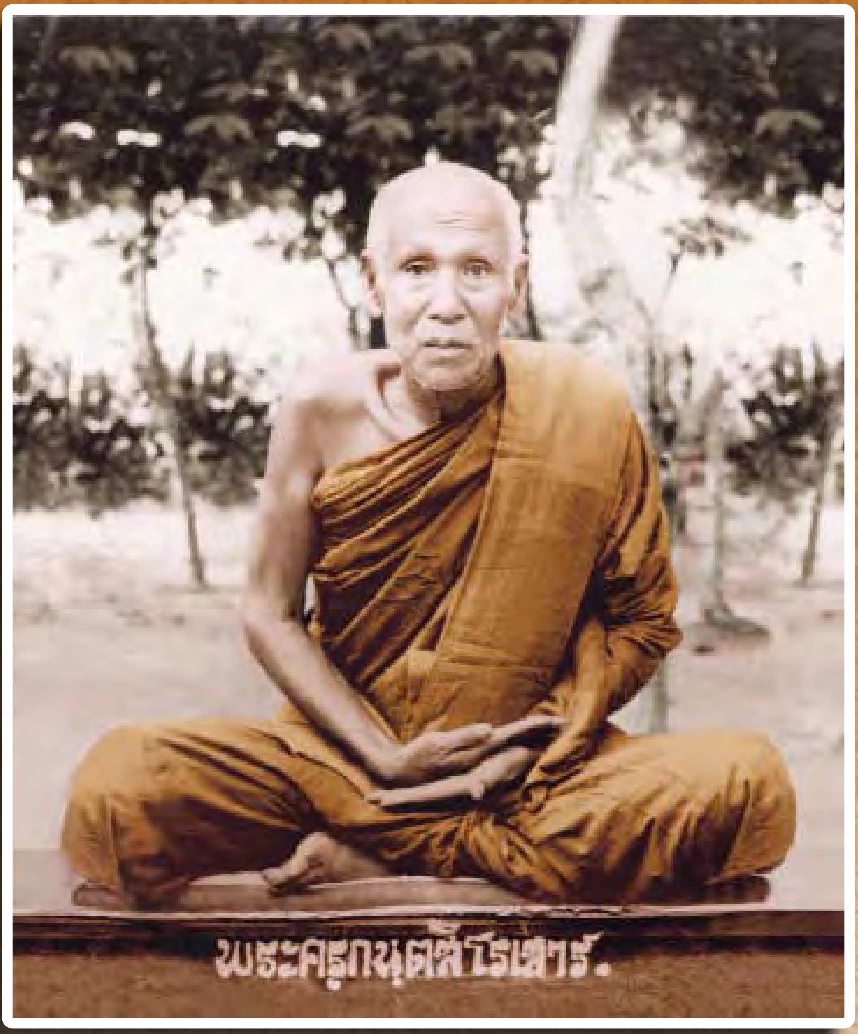
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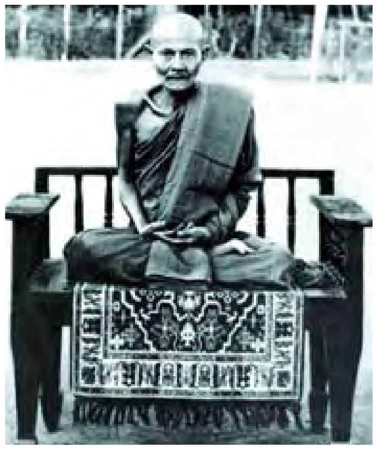
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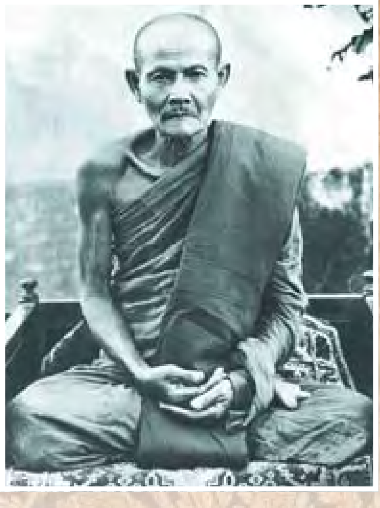
Venerable Ajaan Sao



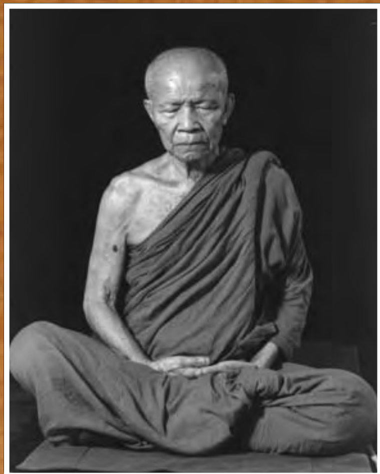








Venerable Ajaan Mun



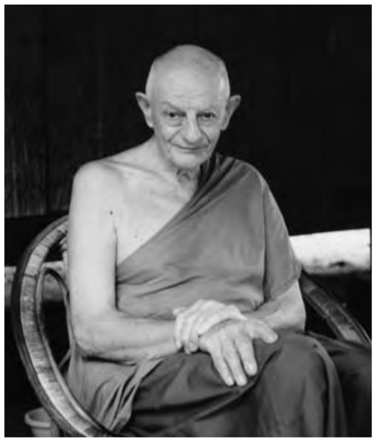


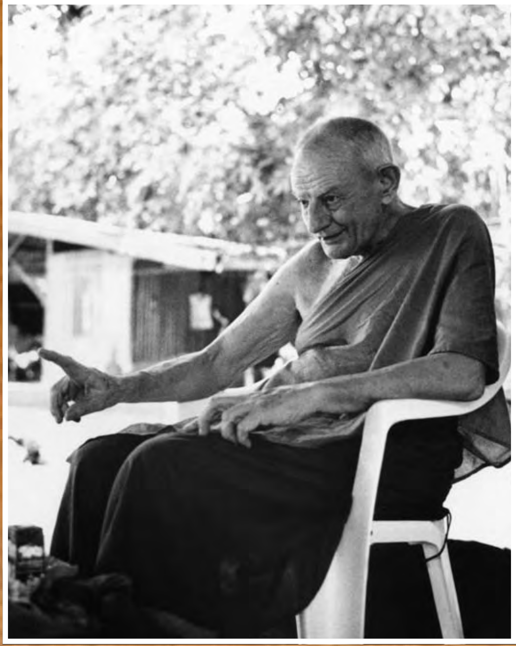






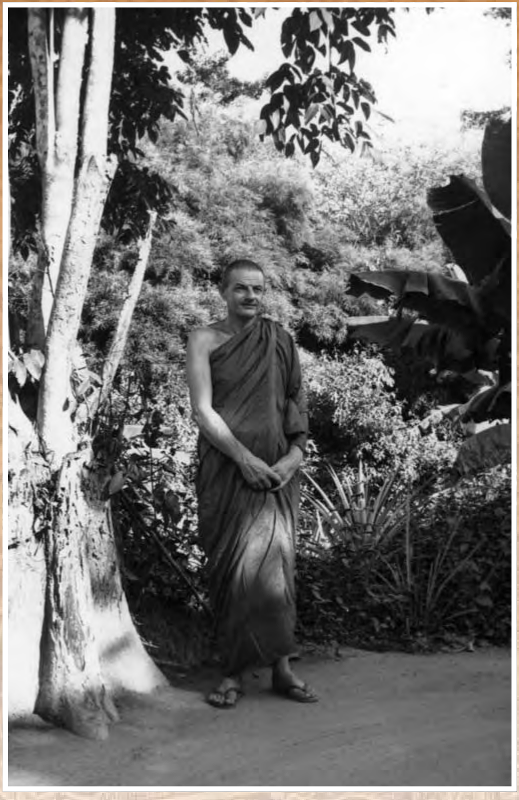
Venerable Ajaan Mahā Boowa











Venerable Ajaan Panya

Translator's Introduction

This book is a translation of the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna* practices of Venerable Ajaan Mun Bhūridatta Thera, and it was written by Venerable Ajaan Mahā Boowa Ñāṇasampanno Thera as a companion volume to the biography of Venerable Ācariya Mun.

The author of this book, Venerable Ajaan Mahā Boowa, who is now (1995) already 82 years old, has been ordained for 62 years. He founded Baan Taad Forest Monastery 40 years ago and has lived there ever since as the Abbot. He first went to stay with his teacher, Venerable Ajaan Mun, in 1941 and learnt the ways of practice and meditation from him for 8 years. Much of what Venerable Ajaan Mahā Boowa learnt has been written about in this book so that the reader can get a fair idea of what hardships and difficulties he had to undergo.

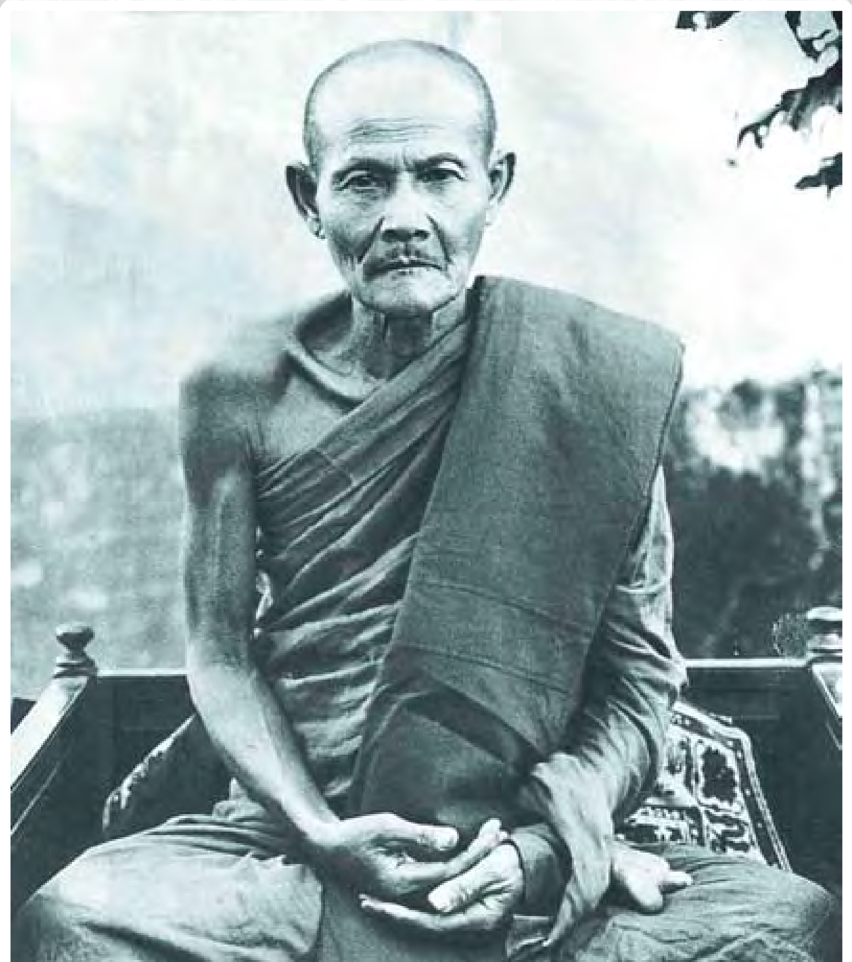
There are already two translations of this book. Only the first of them has been printed, in serial form, in the *'World Fellowship of Buddhists Journal'*, but this translation is very incomplete and rather inaccurate. Whereas the second translation which was done by Venerable Ajaan Suchaat Abhijato was complete and quite accurate. At first I thought of using this translation, correcting it and improving the English (which was already quite good); but then, I had to consider the style of English, the correct meaning of many of the technical terms and the way to bring out some of the underlying subtleties of the text. In the end I decided that it was easier to start over again and do it all in my own words. But in all of this, I must acknowledge the debt I owe to the translation that was done by Venerable Ajaan Suchaat.

This book includes many things that may not be easy to understand for the reader who is not familiar with the theory and practice of Theravada Buddhism. For this reason the reader may find that for the first reading it is better to skip over many of the deeper explanations of the Dhamma teaching, and to go on to the methods and practices of the *Ācariyas* which are related herein. However, it should be realised that one cannot get a full and proper understanding of the ways in which these *Ācariyas* practised without also reading about the underlying reasons for what they did.

In the text, many words in the *Pāli* language are used. But in all cases a translation is given close by in the text, in footnotes, and in a few cases in which commonly used words occur, such as "Dhamma", *"Samādhi",* etc..., no translation is given. The principle which I have used in using *Pāli* terms is that it is better for the reader to not understand rather than misunderstand a forced translation. But in any case, there is a fairly good and complete glossary at the back of the book, while some special words have also been covered more completely in an appendix. In the text I use both words Ajaan and *Ācariya,* both have the same meaning being "Teacher", but in Thai the word Ajaan is also used as a respectful title for a senior monk. Normally when referring to a senior monk by name or in place of his name I have used the word "Ajaan", but if I want to refer to him as a teacher I have used the correct *Pāli* word *"Ācariya".*

Finally I must express my thanks and gratitude to the person (who wishes to remain anonymous), who has typed out the whole book and carried out two series of corrections and several other things besides, while at the same time supporting a house and family.

Bhikkhu Paññāvaḍḍho
Baan Taad Forest Monastery
(1995)



Venerable Ajaan Mun

Paṭipadā

























1

Kammaṭṭhāna

The word *"Kammaṭṭhāna"* is a technical term, and it is given a special significance in the way of Dhamma as practised by those who are *Dhutanga Bhikkhus*. The true basis of *kammaṭṭhāna* however, is to be found in everyone — in men, women, those who are ordained and lay people, for it refers to such things as hair of the head, hair of the body, and the rest.

Some people may not have understood the full meaning of the word "*kammaṭṭhāna*" or *"Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu,"* so this book will be concerned only with the way of practice of *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna* as derived from Venerable Ajaan Mun *(Bhūridatta Thera).* Outside of this I am not well versed or experienced in other ways of practice, only having a passing acquaintance with them without ever having had a chance to become familiar with them. However, concerning those ways in which Venerable Ajaan Mun led his followers I understand them quite well, having seen, heard, and practised them. But before writing about this, some explanation of the word *kammaṭṭhāna* will be given, for it is the basis of the way of practice of *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* and this will serve as a guide to show how it conforms to the practices which will be described later on.

The word "*kammaṭṭhāna*" has been well known among Buddhists for a long time and the accepted meaning is: "the place of work (or basis of work)." *But the "work" here is a very important work and means the work of demolishing the world of birth (bhava); thus, demolishing (future) births, kilesas, taṇhā, and the removal and destruction of all avijjā from our hearts. All this is in order that we may be free from dukkha.* In other words, free from birth, old age, pain and death, for these are the bridges that link us to the round of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa),* which is never easy for any beings to go beyond and be free. This is the meaning of "work" in this context rather than any other meaning, such as work as is usually done in the world. The result that comes from putting this work into practice, even before reaching the final goal, is happiness in the present and in future lives.

Therefore those Bhikkhus who are interested and who practise these ways of Dhamma are usually known as *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* a title of respect given with sincerity by fellow Buddhists.

A form of *kammaṭṭhāna* which has been very important since the time of the Buddha, and is taught by the *Upajjhāya* (Preceptor) at the time of ordination, consists of five parts of the body: "Kesa — hair of the head; Loma — hair of the body; Nakhā — nails; Dantā — teeth; Taco — skin" in both forward and reverse order. These are taught so that the one who has been ordained should grasp them as a method of contemplation, going back and forth over them, time after time until skill is gained and one of them, or all five, are known thoroughly. For these five are important parts of the bodies of all men and women.

But that which is called the *"kammaṭṭhāna",* which is the "supporting object" *(ārammaṇa)* of any particular *citta,* is of many kinds, and according to the texts, which can be consulted by those who are interested, there are forty such objects.[1] The main reason why there are so many different kinds of *kammaṭṭhāna* is to allow those who are interested in practising to choose one or more which are suitable to their characters, for the characteristics of people differ. This is similar to diseases, which are of many kinds and therefore require different medicines to treat them.

The method is to take up one of those objects and to repeat its name *(parikamma–bhāvanā)* in any bodily position that is suitable or appropriate. For example, repeating, Kesa… Kesa… Kesa… Kesa..., or Loma… Loma… Loma… Loma..., *having mindfulness to maintain constant control, and not letting the heart wander elsewhere, while being aware of the particular Dhamma object, the name of which one is repeating, and not frequently changing about between several Dhamma objects — which is characteristic of one who is halfhearted and desultory.* One should continue in this way until either truly experiencing the results or truly knowing that the object does not suit one's character, before changing to a new object.

One who truly knows that a particular object suits his character should take hold of it as the heart's guide[2] and continue to persevere without weakening until he experiences the results more and more and goes forward into

1. The full list of these may be found in the *'Buddhist Dictionary'* by Venerable Ñānatiloka or in the '*Visuddhimagga*' (translated as the *'Path of Purification*').

2. This means that the meditation object, which may be a word such as "Buddho", or the feeling of the breath moving in and out, etc., is kept in mind until it becomes a companion and a refuge which turns the heart towards Dhamma.

the ground[3] of Dhamma where it becomes necessary for him to change the object of Dhamma — which he will know for himself.

The result that comes from practising with these or any other kinds of Dhamma that suit one's character, is an increasing happiness and calm within the heart which one has never experienced before. This calmness of heart begins at the lowest level, which is the attainment of calm for only a few moments. Then it increases to a moderate duration, and finally to a state of calm for as long as one wants to rest, and to withdraw from it as one wishes. This last state of calm is much more subtle, deep and intimate than the others.

While the *citta* is calm it can let go of all those emotional disturbances which normally trouble it in various ways and then there remains only the "knowing" and "brightness" which are innate qualities of the heart, as well as happiness which arises from the calm, and accords with the level of the heart. There is nothing else there, because at this moment the *citta* is without any objective support *(ārammaṇa)* and it is its own self and alone. Even if there are subtle kinds of *kilesas* within it they do not show themselves, for it is like still, clear, unclouded water in which any remaining sediment has settled to the bottom and does not make the water muddy, so that it is clear and clean and fit to be used for drinking, washing or anything else.

The heart which is without any objective support is peaceful in itself and for however long it stays alone it will be happy, wonderful, meaningful and of great value causing "the owner" to admire it long and much while it remains in that state. In that it is both meaningful and wonderful it never becomes insipid even long afterwards. This is because the heart which is profound and wonderful is already within oneself, so that when it is cleansed and one goes inside and truly reaches it even for only a moment, it immediately shows one by direct experience how wonderful it is. But if one lets it go, letting it slip out of one's hands, and it deteriorates due to not truly going back to the method of practice or trying to develop it further, it will cause one to long for it and to feel very upset that one cannot get back to that state of the *citta*. It is probably for this reason, that at the time of the Buddha, the heart of one of the *Sāvakas*[4] developed and deteriorated up to six times, until he became very disappointed and sorry because of his longing. But finally he became

3. (*Bhūmi–Dhamma*) lit: "ground of Dhamma" meaning the field of Dhamma.

4. *(Sāvaka)* lit: "one who hears". This refers to those who "hear" the Dhamma. It is a term which is used in reference to those who have attained the "Paths" of "Stream Entry" and beyond. *Sāvaka Arahant* — refers to those who became *Arahants* by hearing the Dhamma directly from the Buddha.

one of the *Sāvaka Arahants* because exertion and striving acted as a bridge that made the link, enabling him to penetrate and reach the Deathless *(Amata)* Dhamma — which is the realm of happiness. This he did by relying upon the *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhamma* as the way to go forward.

Of the countless Buddhas and Sāvaka Arahants of each Buddha who have attained *Parinibbāna* throughout the immeasurable past, including those of the Lord Buddha, the *Samaṇa* Gotama and his *Sāvakas* who passed on a few thousand years ago, all of them did so and arose up to the state of Buddha and the state of *Arahant* by using one or more of the *kammaṭṭhānas* — such as the five *Kammaṭṭhānas.* Not even one of them realised Dhamma without a *kammaṭṭhāna,* so one may reasonably claim that *kammaṭṭhāna* is the birthplace of all the Exalted Ones. This is because, before it is possible for the *rūpa* and *nāma*[5] of a Bhikkhu or a lay person to develop and metamorphose from the state of an ordinary person *(puthujjana)* into that of a Noble person *(Ariya puggala)* from the lowest to the highest level, he must have a *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhamma* as the device that will "wash him clean", and the device that will in various ways, process and alter his thinking and understanding that are the background of his *citta* which has the "seeds" of *vaṭṭa*[6] embedded within it, and will scatter them so that they disperse and disappear entirely. Then it will alter and become the "Buddha–heart" and an entirely new sphere of heart arises in complete purity.

Therefore, all of the Buddhas have upheld the *kammaṭṭhāna* as a vitally important and essential Dhamma, and every one of the "World Teachers" (*Sāsadā*)[7] have always praised it highly in the circle of those who followed their religion right up to the present era. This is also the case in the religion of our *Samaṇa* Gotama who upheld the *kammaṭṭhāna* as the pattern and the ancient unchanging tradition to be followed, and he was the first and the foremost and he became the Lord Buddha because of the forty *Kammaṭṭhānas,* of which

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5. Form: *rūpa,* name: *nāma.* These refer to the five *khandhas. Rūpa* refers to the *rūpa khandha* and *nāma* refers to the remaining four *khandhas* of *vedanā, saññā, sankhāra, viññāṇa.* See Appendix on page 569.

6. *(Vaṭṭa)* lit: "the round". The round of birth, life and death in *saṁsāra.*

7. *Sāsadā:* This refers to the Buddhas from the infinite past up to Gotama, the Lord Buddha of the present age.

ānāpānasati[8] is an example. The Lord Buddha also taught these *kammaṭṭhānas* to his followers and they have come down to us in the present age, and they still act as a bridge, linking beings in the world right up to *Nibbāna* — and they will continue to do so until the end is reached of the power of the inherent good characteristics *(vāsanā)* of those who follow the Lord. For these reasons the term "*kammaṭṭhāna*" has always been a special form of Dhamma within the circle of the *Sāsana,* and it will always be so.

Someone who has faith in Buddhism but has not yet cultivated and practised the way of *kammaṭṭhāna,* yet knows something about the hidden things which are within himself, both good and bad, should not just think how clever he is in his self-knowledge, even if he can remember everything which he has read out of the *Ti–Piṭaka.* Because the *Ti–Piṭaka* is only a balance sheet of the good and evil of those things, or natural phenomena, which are within oneself and it remains like this until it has been recognised by a form of practice in which the *kammaṭṭhāna* clearly shows up the way leading to the truth in accordance with the intention of the Lord in revealing Dhamma and teaching the world.

These forty aspects of *kammaṭṭhāna* are the cupboard where the *Ti–Piṭaka* is kept. They are the means for the destruction of becoming and birth. They are the tools for destroying the "rotating wheel" *(cakka)* that leads worldly beings whirling around through birth and death until they neither know their old and new lives, nor their old and new *dukkha* which is all mixed up with these lives, all of which they cut off completely.

Doing a form of practice which is without any of these Dhammas in any way, to give support and help to it will not lead to the destruction of the *kilesas* and the mass of *Dukkha* which are within one, nor will it reduce them, ameliorate them and eradicate them at all. But a practice which has these Dhammas to give some aid and support to it can certainly destroy the mass of *Dukkha* entirely.

For this reason, one who practises for calm and happiness and for knowing clearly and penetrating into all Dhammas must take hold of these *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhammas* as the life-line of his practice all the way through from the lowest to the highest level of Dhamma, this being the freedom *(vimutti)* of *Nibbāna.* Whoever does the practice to develop virtue in a good and true manner and by whatever method, when he reaches a truly decisive situation — in other words, when he is taking a step up from a lower to a higher ground or level

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8. *Ānāpānasati:* The practice of mindfully knowing the breath going in and out.

of *citta* and Dhamma — he will have to turn back and take up one or other of these *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhammas* as the means of going on, so that he will be able to pass through and go beyond with ease and safety. Because these Dhammas are where all the Dhamma Truths *(Sacca–Dhamma),* which have Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* as their topmost point, are drawn together. All these Dhammas are within the sphere of the *Buddha Sāsana,* and all the Great Teachers *(Sāsadā)* of each era have been the first to reveal and teach them, each in the same manner, after which they were handed down successively from teacher to pupil.

Those who are still doubtful of the Buddhas, each of whom revealed and taught Dhamma in the various ages, until we come to the present Great Teacher who is our Lord Buddha, should practise and investigate by the way of the Dhamma of *kammaṭṭhāna,* which he also demonstrated, proving it truly by the ways of wisdom until the results arose as he had intended. Then one will know from the knowledge and experience that arises from one's own practice with complete clarity that *the Great Teacher and Dhamma are not different but are one and the same thing.* Which accords with the essence of Dhamma that the Lord revealed in brief, thus:

> *"Whoever sees Dhamma sees the Tathāgata."*

The Dhamma in this saying proclaims all the *Tathāgatas* very clearly and lets us know that the *Tathāgatas* always dwell in Dhamma and are not dependent on time and place. For even though each of the Buddhas entered *Parinibbāna* long ago, as understood in the conventions of the world, the truth in fact is that the *Tathāgata* is just this Dhamma.

> All those who have seen Dhamma within the heart with clarity and certainty have no doubts regarding the *Tathāgatas* at all — and what state the *Tathāgatas* dwell in. For although the world understands that once they have entered *Nibbāna* they all disappear into silence and the Great Teacher is no longer there to teach with *mettā.* The truth is that the Dhamma which the Lord bestowed and which causes Enlightenment to arise in his followers is in fact our Great Teacher.

If one has enough interest to want to have the Great Teacher within one's heart, it can be there at all times, just as if the Lord Buddha was still living. It only depends on the extent to which one is wholehearted in one's respect

and reverence and pays heed to Dhamma which represents the Lord, and to what extent one rates it as more important than other things. For even if the Lord were still alive it would be of no help to one at all if one took no interest in it, and one would still be just as lost as one was before without gaining anything.

So as not to cause regret and remorse to oneself in the future, and to bring contentment of heart both in the present and the future, one should practise and develop oneself by way of the Dhamma that was bestowed on us by the Lord Buddha as his inheritance and which stands in place of him. The results will be the same in all respects, as if the Lord Buddha was still living and there will be no difference in it at all. In other words one will have Dhamma, which is the Great Teacher in one's heart constantly at all times.

The topic of *kammaṭṭhāna* up to this point, has been considered repeatedly and at length until the reader must be getting tired. So I hope you will excuse my lack of ability once again which leads me to repeat myself sometimes. But to some extent I think that this is necessary, for there might be some who do not yet understand the meaning of *kammaṭṭhāna* as they should and by this means they may be able to understand and to learn some of the ways of practice. Then, when they feel they would like to do some practice it will be much easier for them to do so.

From this point on, we will consider the ways of practice that Ajaan Mun led his followers to do, which are still done right up to the present day. Doing the practice in the way that he taught is quite difficult because it goes contrary to the ways of the world in bodily actions, speech and mind. The basis of these practices are the thirteen *"Dhutangas"* and the fourteen *"khandha–vatta"*[9] (duties), which are mostly methods of practice concerning the physical body from the duties to be done in regard to visiting guests; right up to the forty *kammaṭṭhānas,* which are the methods of practice by way of the heart (mind). These are all interrelated with the various modes of striving.

Those who wholeheartedly take up the life of the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* must put up with things which go against their ingrained habits and which have been long buried in their bodies and hearts until they have become strong tendencies of character which are very difficult to get rid of. They must

9. See Appendix on page 569.

strive to get rid of them without weakening or giving up, because the manners and ways of those who are ordained are different from those of lay people in all sorts of ways. For in behaviour, manners, restraint and watchfulness, they must do things in the customary ways of the Bhikkhus, which is that of a calm and seemly manner. Therefore the *Dhutanga Bhikkhu* should be strict in doing those duties and other practices which he ought to do, so that he may feel contented and easy in himself and be an admirable example which gives confidence to others. For the thirteen *Dhutanga* observances and the various duties together with all the *kammaṭṭhānas,* are just methods of Dhamma that straighten out the characteristic tendency of being obstinate.

Bhikkhus are derived from lay people and those tendencies of character are bound to be attached to them. If there are no methods of straightening them out, or applying disciplines then it is probable that they will not go beyond the stage of receiving Bhikkhu ordination and will ruin themselves and also their monasteries and religion. For generally speaking, the tendencies of character of people are such that they like to torment and ruin themselves and others in various ways, and this they do continually without even having to depend on any deliberate intention to do so. This is due to the formation of habits and their ambition which desires all sorts of things, which lead them on. Or because they cannot correctly understand a situation and then jump to conclusions and guess what is right. This opens the way for them to have *dukkha* and trouble all the time in all situations and seldom to experience the ease and comfort of body and happiness of heart which they desire.

The words, "torment and ruin themselves", in the above paragraph means various ways of thinking which are harmful to themselves, although within themselves they may or may not know that they are wrong (thoughts) and that they are the fuse which burns leading to damage and destruction for others, until it reaches the point where they spread out into speech and physical action — which may be called a case of persecution and destruction of everything.

Now, we shall go on to describe the ways of practical training of those Bhikkhus who were living with Venerable Ajaan Mun. After this we shall write about what happened to some of his followers after they left Venerable Ajaan and went off to practise and to live on their own.

To begin with, those who came to Venerable Ajaan Mun's monastery, for training and the practice of kammaṭṭhāna were normally taught by him that they should

make themselves to be diligent and energetic in doing all the duties and works which a Bhikkhu ought to do. He taught them to be sharp in hearing and seeing, to be nimble and dextrous in movement, to do things quickly and not in a tardy, clumsy manner. He taught them to be resourceful and to use their ingenuity both in external things and internally for the sake of Dhamma in all sorts of ways, and not to remain idle like a lost person. In moving here and there they should have mindfulness present and he taught them to be careful and precise in all circumstances.

In regard to meditation practice Venerable Ajaan Mun taught all methods, starting from the five *kammaṭṭhāna* as a basis and going on to include the other *kammaṭṭhāna* depending on what suited the character of each individual. While listening to his teaching they would also practise *samādhi* meditation in themselves and there were some whose *citta* became calm and peaceful while they were listening to his teaching and the state of *samādhi* arose in them, even though it had never previously been experienced by them since they had started practising the training. Many Bhikkhus and novices who went to be trained by Venerable Ajaan gained results from *samādhi* meditation *(bhāvanā)* while sitting and listening to his teaching in various different ways depending on their individual characteristics, but their experiences were hardly ever identical.

Receiving the teaching from Venerable Ajaan was a good way to lull the hearts of those who were listening, into both the states of *samādhi* and wisdom *(paññā)* in their various ascending levels. Those who had never experienced a state of calm began to get calm, but those who had already experienced some calm increased its depth each time that they listened to his teaching. Those who already had *samādhi* as their basis would gradually increase the firmness of that basis, whereas, for those who had begun to use wisdom, the teaching was a means of helping to develop their wisdom each time. Finally, for those who had attained the field of wisdom as their basis, at the time they were listening to the teaching it was as if Venerable Ajaan helped to clean up the method of mindfulness and wisdom so that it became wider and deeper every time.

After the teaching, the Bhikkhus variously went to practise, each in his own place and way. As for resting and sleeping, Venerable Ajaan did not lay down any fixed rule or discipline, for he left it up to each one to find out what suited him best. This was because of the differences in the extent of each individual's strengths and weaknesses in regard to their physical con-

stitution *(dhātu–khandha),* their ability to put forward effort in developing themselves and the strength of their resolve towards the various aspects of Dhamma. Some took time to rest during the night, while others took a short rest during the day and increased their effort during the night, lying down and sleeping little, or some nights not sleeping at all and putting a lot of effort into their practice. Venerable Ajaan, therefore left it to each individual to determine what was convenient for them in resting, sleeping and making efforts in their practice.

> Along the path of progress which Venerable Ajaan Mun taught, the five *kammaṭṭhāna* and the thirteen *Dhutanga*[10] were considered by him as being very important. In fact they could rightly be called the "life-line" of the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* who were his followers.

Whoever came to him for teaching was sure to be taught these *kammaṭṭhāna* practices and the *Dhutanga* observances within a very short time. If it was during the dry season he would probably teach them to go and stay in the forest under the shade of a tree,[11] saying:

> "Those large trees over there are thick with leaves, shady and peaceful, suitable for the practice of *bhāvanā,* the weather is good and the place is free from the disturbance and confusion of the world. Those hills are places where your eyes and ears will open in the joy of Dhamma. Over there are caves and overhanging cliffs, all good places to stay and develop the practice and search for peace and happiness of heart. In those wild forests you will be able to get rid of all kinds of laziness and fear. A lazy or timid person should go and live in such a place for it will help him to develop effort and diligence and also to overcome his fear so that he becomes more courageous and bold and relieves the load and pressure on his heart, which has become too heavy."
>
> "Over on that hill, in that cave, or under that overhanging cliff the air is good, it is right for *bhāvanā* and the *citta* can easily become concentrated and drop into a state of calm. Once the *citta* has become calm one will be able to see various strange and mysterious things that are beyond the ordinary

10. The "five *kammaṭṭhāna*" are: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin. (For reference see footnote 1 on page 2). For the thirteen *Dhutangas,* see Appendix on page 569.

11. Living under the shade of a tree is one of the *Dhutanga* practices.

level of perception. On that hill, in that cave, under that cliff — there are such things out there and anyone who goes to stay there should be careful and self-controlled. They should not carelessly think that because there are no other people and things to be seen or heard, that there is nothing else there. For there are many things which are more mysterious and subtle than the ordinary *citta* is able to experience. In fact there is far more than the material things which we see about us in this world — but we have no senses which are suitably adapted to display clearly their existence to us in the way we perceive other things in the world. So even though they are there, few or many as it may be, it is as though they did not exist at all."

"Therefore those who practise should be careful to behave in a proper and modest manner in every situation and they should at least be calm and emotionally cool. If on the other hand, they have gone beyond this stage, all those who have *Deva* bodies in their different realms and levels of existence and who live in that region of this world, and elsewhere, will be glad and full of admiration."

"This world is not void of all sorts of beings both gross and subtle, and even in the bodies of human beings and animals there are many kinds of organisms living in dependence on them; and those who practise to attain freedom from all conditioned things *(sabhāva–dhamma)*[12] in all three realms of existence should therefore, neither affirm nor deny things which they personally know and see, saying that they exist in truth, or that they do not exist and are not true."

"Even in ordinary material objects there are both gross and subtle things and we still cannot know everything about them. Sometimes a person stumbles into things which can lead to widespread destruction of property and this characteristic is still there in the nature of a person who likes being vain and self-opinionated. For while he goes about in his clumsy, stupid and silly ways with no mindfulness present he can stumble into such things in the belief that there is nothing there at all. But how is it that a thing such as that whose existence he refused to believe in at that time and in that place could cause such destruction? This should be enough to prove to him what habitual tendencies of carelessness he has. That is, of course, unless he has no intention to give way or prove anything. In which case there is no way for him to know the truths which are to be found everywhere in the world and in Dhamma."

12. *Sabhāva–dhamma:* Things as they are in themselves, or in their own nature.

"On that hill, in that cave, and under that overhanging cliff; I have stayed and practised there; they are places that capture the heart and free it from all worry and concern connected with the distractions and disturbances of the world. If you have it in your heart to seek the "realm" of freedom from *dukkha,* you should search for such places in which to stay, to practise and to put your life and everything into the hands of Dhamma. Then it will be as though the Great Teacher in person were sitting in front of you in all situations. Both asleep and awake you will be happy and the work connected with the heart will progress steadily and not hesitatingly and desultorily as it does in places that are distracting and disturbing. The Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvaka Arahants*[13] made sacrifices and they made the sacrifice of giving their lives to Dhamma in such places. But those who see no harm in the *kilesas, taṇhā,* and the round *(vaṭṭa)* of *saṁsāra* are engrossed in aimlessly wandering and reserving room in the cemetery of birth and death. The way that they go about is that of people who have no destination at the end of the road and they find no pleasure in those places where the Buddha and the Arahants were glad to stay. Here is a charnel ground, and over there a wild jungle! Go and live in such places with the hill and forest people. They are places which in all ways will give you the incentive to work to cut away at the endless process of going the round of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa)* in your heart, making it weaker at every stage of striving. Those who do such work in a place that is suitable, and with the desire to get rid of the anxiety of coming to birth and death for many more lives, are very different from the ordinary run of people in the world. But in an unsuitable place, even though they walk *caṅkama* or sit in meditation for the same amount of time, the results are likely to be very different. This is because their attentiveness, the closeness with which mindfulness and wisdom follow their minds and the general feeling about things in their surrounding environment are all different; so the results which come from conditions that are different must also be different."

"One who practises the way and truly takes the Buddha as his refuge should recollect the Dhamma that he gave to us far more than the difficulties and hardships, of which the fear of death is the most important. Others include such things as, lack of the four requisites,[14] such as the food which is attained on the almsround; the difficulty experienced in making the effort to train and discipline the

13. See footnote 4 on page 3.

14. The four requisites are: clothing, food, shelter, and medicines.

citta which is wild, uncouth and adventurous, for this is its primordial nature; and the hardships involved in walking or sitting in meditation over a long stretch of time, which creates painful feelings that torment both the body and heart. There are also hardships which are due to the *citta* refusing to give way and live within the prescribed boundary which is required; the hardships of hunger and weakness due to taking little food, because of not eating for a day or two or fasting for many days accordingly as it suits each individual's characteristics, so that the work of heart can develop more easily; the hardships of living alone, and loneliness with no friends around nor the teacher who has trained and taught one and shared knowledge and experience together; the hardship of thinking about home, relatives and friends who used to give a sense of warmth and comfort; the hardship of being soaked wet by rain and having to put up with the suffering of having no shelter against the sun and rain; the hardship of feeling cold and numb as well as aches and pains which have come from various causes; the hardship of getting a fever with headache, heat and pain in various parts of the body and having no medicine or means of looking after oneself; the hardship of fearing death while living alone in the forests or mountains without anyone to look after and protect one, and after one has died, nobody to take care of the corpse which would remain for the crows, vultures, dogs and flies to fight over and eat. All these kinds of thought are obstacles on the path toward Nibbāna. One must not give way and let them trouble one's heart, for they can ruin a person and he will not be able to get through to the good."

"One should realise straight away that these thoughts are the substance of the world of causal uprising *(samudaya)*.[15] They are the key which unlocks *dukkha* so that it arises and overwhelms the heart until it can find no way out. One who practises must have the courage and endurance to put up with the sun, rain, hunger, and the various kinds of suffering and hardship that arise within the body and heart as well as putting up with the various aches and pains which come to one, both externally and internally and which are accepted by everyone as things that all are bound to have in one way or another."

"He who practises must train his heart to become firm and strong, to withstand the force of the storms which are always waiting for a chance to arise. They generally arise from the heart itself, where they are poised ready to break

15. This is the second factor of the Four Noble Truths: 1) *Dukkha* 2) The cause of *Dukkha's* uprising 3) *Dukkha's* cessation 4) The path leading to *Dukkha's* cessation.

in and invade one and disable one's resolve to work with effort, so that one becomes weak and ineffectual and one's previous strength, resolve and readiness to put up with difficulties steadily diminishes, until one can no longer progress at all. Finally one comes to a stop, submerged and groping about in *dukkha,* as one used to be before one started out. Day by day one drifts further away from the Great Teacher (*Sāsadā*) and '*Buddhaṁ Saraṇaṁ Gacchāmi*'[16] become mere words which any one can repeat. But the important thing is that the truth of the word '*Buddhaṁ*' becomes steadily more insipid and disappears from one's heart. This is what the Lord called 'one who has given up; defeated by *kilesa–māras,*' which means that he is unable to fight against his own low and baneful thoughts. One who is defeated by *kilesa–māras* gives way and lets the mass of *dukkha* in his *sankhāras*[17] trample on him and destroy him in vain, without his having the ability to find a way of thinking out how to cure himself by means of mindfulness and wisdom. For he has enough mindfulness and wisdom with which he could escape and get himself out of the situation by using the skilful ways of a warrior to save himself from the abyss."

"Whatever enemies there may be in the sphere of the world, none of them have such a subtle and penetrating power as the enemies within the heart — the kilesas and taṇhā. These enemies are a very heavy burden for people who tend to be weak, lazy and not much good at thinking and reasoning so that whenever anything happens to them they just wait and lose out without trying to think for themselves of a way of fighting and striving to get out of it."

"This is the type of character which the *kilesa–māras* delight in and whoever wants to be their favourite should train themselves in this way and accumulate such characteristics so as to become their most favoured servant, the kind who never emerges and lifts his face up to see the light of the meaning of Dhamma — that which can lead them to final freedom from *dukkha.* Under whatever conditions they are born in the future they will then submit their hearts to the *kilesas* — their hearts which are worthy as an offering to the very highest — but the *kilesas* are the ones that always have the power of command over Dhamma in their hearts. When one thinks about this, it is very sad to see even Bhikkhus who are of the type that practise the way, giving in to such vile influences without using any mindfulness

16. "I go to the Buddha as refuge."

17. *Sankhāras:* Thought, imaginative thought, thought which "mixes in and cooks up", thought embellishment. The fourth of the five *khandhas.*

and wisdom to pull themselves up a bit. Enough at least to breathe and live with the peace of Dhamma as should be the case with those who practise the way, going into the hills and caves, carrying the 'klod'[18] and bowl, to practise and develop their *bhāvanā.* But you who have come here to train and practise in this way, are you then going to give way to the *kilesas* and *taṇhā* and let them walk all over you and destroy you and then chant the funeral ceremony for you as they feel like it? If so, then the teacher's heart will break and he will surely die before his pupils do."

In talking about Venerable Ajaan Mun's methods of teaching, it is difficult to catch and display his characteristic ways, for they were the methods of a sage who was clever and penetrating and who lived in this present age. So I feel sorry how in having written his biography *'Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera'* and also in writing this book *'Paṭipadā: Venerable Ācariya Mun's Path of Practice',* I do not have a good enough memory, nor enough ability to conform to his greatness. So I am unable to dig down and find the real essence of his words and Dhamma which matters most in his teaching, so as to present it for you to read, in a way that is fully satisfying and is also appropriate to Venerable Ajaan, who deserved to be called "one who is replete in Dhamma" — which is my opinion. But if I am wrong I apologise.

In teaching the Bhikkhus, Venerable Ajaan laid great stress on the *Dhutanga* observances and he laid special emphasis on that of living in secluded places such as the forests, hills, caves and overhanging cliffs. It seemed to me that he constantly stressed this group of *Dhutangas* almost every time that he taught us. If he did not mention these places at the beginning of his talk, he would do so in a summary at the end. This was consistent with one who practised the way and liked to live in the forests and hills throughout his life and whose ordination was genuine and true.[19]

His teaching rarely, if ever, let the essence of Dhamma become separated from the *Dhutanga* practices. As soon as he had finished leading the Bhikkhus

18. A large umbrella (klod) hung up on any suitable support, with a cylindrical mosquito net hung down from the edge of the klod.

19. Amongst *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* ordination is of two kinds. The first is the usual ordination ceremony; the second is when a Bhikkhu takes on the mental attitudes of a Bhikkhu and no longer thinks, feels or acts as a lay person. This second kind is thought of as the "true ordination".

on a tour to admire the forests, the hills, the caves and overhanging cliffs, which are delightful places, he would take them (in his talk) to the village on the *piṇḍapāta* round for various Dhamma lessons. He would teach them the way the robes should be worn and how they should behave in a proper, restrained manner. Not looking here, there and all over the place which is the manner of someone who has no mindfulness present, but looking in a self-controlled manner, quiet, modest and with mindfulness present in every move that they make. Meanwhile their hearts should ponder whatever Dhamma it has been their habit to practise and develop. *Piṇḍapāta*[20] *is always considered to be a very important duty for the Dhutanga Bhikkhus who follow the way of Venerable Ajaan Mun and they should never miss it*, except only when they do not eat food, in which case it is not necessary to go. He taught that when going on *piṇḍapāta* they should make an effort to work internally without letting up, both while going out and returning to the place where they are staying, and while they are arranging their food, putting it into the bowl and eating it with the hand. Also how, before eating, they should examine reflectively, using the repetition of the *"paṭisaṅkhā yoniso"*[21] as the basis, with whatever skill each one has in accordance with the basic level of his mindfulness and wisdom. This should be done for at least one minute before beginning to eat in a modest, reserved manner while being mindful both of oneself and the bowl. The food which is in the bowl is of many kinds and it appears in various forms, characteristics and colours. When it is all together in the bowl, what does one feel about it? *One should wait and watch for the deceitful trickery of the heart displaying itself in various ways while eating.* Set your mindfulness and wisdom to wait and watch and to check both the hunger that may be produced in an unnatural way, which is the work of *taṇhā* (fiery eyes and a monkey mind), and also the tricks of the mind which may think how if the food is mixed together in various ways its taste will be altered accordingly. By contemplating in this way the mind becomes revolted, disgusted and disinterested and has no desire to eat, for it goes against the natural inclinations of one who does this practice to correct himself in all ways and to get rid of all impurities in his heart.

The method of investigation or contemplation which each individual uses depends on where the skill of each one lies. It may be in contemplating loath-

20. The morning alms round to get food in the bowl.

21. These are the first two words of a short stanza in *Pāli,* which in summary goes: "I reflect on this *piṇḍapāta* food, that it is not for pleasure, strength, beauty etc., but only to overcome painful feelings of hunger and to sustain the body for going on in the practice of Dhamma."

someness or in contemplating the elements,[22] or any other way which reduces and gets rid of the *kilesas, taṇhā* and self-forgetfulness. These are all correct and proper ways for each individual to practise variously as it suits his skill and ability while taking food. *While eating one should make one's task be that of having mindfulness present in every process, by watching the interaction between the citta and the food which is taken and contacts the sensitive taste organs and body (dhātu–khandha) generally while chewing and swallowing it.*

One must not let the *citta* get out of hand and become obsessed with the tastes of various kinds of food — which is self-forgetfulness. For there is one kind of hunger that is due to the physical reaction of the body getting weak and wanting something to cure it, and there is also another kind that is due to the overruling power of craving *(taṇhā)* — the agitation of the heart looking for pleasure. The former is considered to be a normal state of the *khandhas* and even the Arahant can have it, like everyone else. But one must always be cautious and watchful of the latter kind and keep it under control, for if one is unconcerned and disinterested and lets it go its own way without restraint, it will lead one to ruin. Because it is the kind of desire which is under the controlling power of craving which floods everything, everywhere, and is never satisfied.

One who practises the way must have constant mindfulness and wisdom close to the heart to watch over this process of taking food every time he does so, so that his heart will be able to get used to examining and guarding himself in various situations while standing, walking, sitting, lying down, eating and all others, including the various activities around the monastery such as sweeping the ground. These are duties that the monks should do without letting go of their mindfulness and wisdom which are factors of their Dhamma work. For without them in the heart, in whatever they do they become mere performing puppets for whom their work has no meaning — for they have no awareness of themselves.

After the meal the bowl should be washed, wiped dry and if the sun is out, it should be put in the sun for a short while before putting it away in its right place. After that they turn to other things such as the walking meditation, sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* or other kinds of work. After eating it is usually better to work at the walking meditation rather than sitting, because the activity gets rid of drowsiness better than other methods. But any day that one goes without food one will be able to sit and practise meditation at any time and in any posture without much likelihood of being troubled by drowsiness.

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22. The four material elements *(dhātu)* of Earth, Water, Fire and Air.

Therefore, those who are suited to this way of practice, often like to fast. Sometimes they fast for a few days, sometimes for many, sometimes for two or three days, up to nineteen or twenty days, or a whole month and in some cases taking no food at all except water. Although after fasting for several days in most cases they will take a food drink such as Ovaltine (if it is available), which is enough to relieve physical weakness. They do not take it every day, but only on those days when they feel very tired and weak.

In the days when Venerable Ajaan Mun was a teacher, there was no question of milk, Ovaltine, white sugar, cocoa, coffee, or anything of this sort. One could not even find any pictures of such things to gaze at when one felt hungry — although looking at them could hardly cure one's hunger. It was very different from the present day, for now there is an abundance of everything until it has become a case of opulence more than of starvation and lack. It is probably for this reason that we *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* find it very difficult to follow the way of Venerable Ajaan Mun and complain out loud that the *citta* does not become concentrated and calm and it is very troublesome. It is like this all the time and almost everywhere, but truly, how can it be expected to get calm (and here you must excuse me if I put down the truth of the matter); for in the morning they go on the alms round and they return with the bowl filled with sweet and savoury foods, and sometimes carrying an extra food container, and when they arrive at the assembly hall the food carriers are put down in rows. But there is no way you can avoid accepting it — for it is only given out of faith by people who have the purpose of making merit by doing good acts and who have made an effort to come from all sorts of places, both far and near in order to share in the merit from the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* with smiles and happy expressions. However much they give they are not afraid of having nothing left, because the power of faith leads them on to better themselves.

Up to this point it is troublesome enough, but then at midday, or in the afternoon and evening, there is ice, orange juice, soft drinks, cocoa, coffee, sugar cane juice, sugar, lots of everything coming until there is no way of consuming it and one just gives up — inundated!

Such *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* are therefore very rich but their meditation practice is not good. They are sluggish and tired, like a heavily laden ship just waiting and admiring the water without yet having left port. Therefore those who aim for the "shore" of *Nibbāna* are very careful, watchful and strict with

themselves and are not thinking only of their mouths and stomachs, nor how difficult and hard it is, for they strive and persevere and fight against the obstacles which bar the way. They are not careless with things, nor with the food, the requisites for monks and other things which they are given. For even if there is much they take only a little, knowing what is the right amount.

It is much the same with those who give up lying down, who reduce the amount of food they take or those who go on fast, for they are all methods of leading them to calm and happiness of heart. For those who find that fasting suits them, however long they go on fasting their hearts become increasingly calm and clear and their level[23] steadily goes up and becomes more subtle. Calm is then attained much more quickly and easily than usual, and when they withdraw from it to think and research by way of wisdom their hearts will be skilful, agile and daring and whatever they investigate they can penetrate throughout just as the heart wishes. As for hunger and tiredness, instead of being a trouble and torment to the body and mind, it becomes a smooth and pleasant way for them to progress each time that they reduce the amount of food they take or go on fast.

Those whose natures are suited to this way will always try to strive and do the practice by fasting, and contentment with few things, in the foregoing way, even while they are in the midst of an abundance of the four requisites. Because they look on it as just that which is enough to sustain life from day to day, whereas the essential thing is the Dhamma in the heart. This they hold on to in a resolute unwavering manner, with their lives as the guarantee that they would never consent to backslide or let go of it. For those who practise and who are prepared to die for the essential meaning and Dhamma which truly leads to the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* everywhere is suitable for doing the work of *bhāvanā.* This is their aim and they are not concerned about whatever sufferings and difficulties there may be. If they are deficient or lacking in anything they submit their hearts to Dhamma, which is the way that frees them from all *Dukkha* entirely, and has nothing secreted in it that could turn it into falsehood. Thus, whether they are walking, standing, sitting or lying down, they work all the time as if they were in the presence of the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the *Sangha* in all situations, excepting only when they sleep. But with this one exception they spend the whole of their time in

23. "Level" means the level at which the *citta* is functioning. Thus a low level, will give rise to low and gross thoughts and functions and for a high level they will be correspondingly high and subtle.

gaining freedom from the *kilesas* — those things which bind up and entangle them in various ways. They purge their hearts of these *kilesas* without giving up or losing heart — as if they were about to destroy the *kilesas* and get rid of them from their hearts at that moment leaving none remaining to cause them any more trouble.

Those whose tendencies of character are suited to this method, will practise this way with urgency and no slackening or weakening of effort which could let some *kilesas,* amongst those that have already been got rid of return, take heart and laugh in ridicule and brighten with power over the heart once again. As for the *kilesas* which still remain, these Bhikkhus strive to go on fighting against them until they reach the state of victory.

Those whose tendencies are suited to a particular way and who have wholeheartedly set themselves to reach the goal of Dhamma are most likely to strengthen their efforts in the foregoing way. For instance, those who find reducing the amount of food they take to be the right way for their character will always try to use this in association with their way of practice and they are not likely to give up this method the whole way through until they reach the end of the path or until they reach a state in which the body becomes weak. In which case they may ease up and take more food as the situation demands and then later on reduce it as they did before, alternating in this way to suit circumstances.

Those who find that doing a lot of the walking meditation suits their nature, will always try to work in the mode of walking rather than any other bodily attitude. Even though they may change in between times to other attitudes, it will be just for a physical change of posture, after which they will revert back to walking which they have found to give more results than other ways.

Those who find that frequently sitting in practice suits them better than other ways will try to work in this way more than others, only adopting other bodily attitudes for a temporary change of posture. It is similar for those who find that much standing or lying down suits them, they mostly use those methods, all of which depend on the skill of each individual. Even the place in which they work must also suit their individual temperaments differently, for some like and gain heart from wide open spaces and a good climate such as being out in the open in the evening or the middle of the night. Others gain heart from living in caves, on hill tops or mountain slopes, in open forest or

by a pond or other bodies of water, but that from which they gain heart best differs from person to person. In any case, those who practise the way and who aim for self-development will know their own temperaments quite well and will always try to work in whatever posture and place that they find to be suited to the nature of their own hearts.

Venerable Ajaan Mun taught all his followers how to practise the way, both inwardly and externally in precise detail. He taught every aspect of Dhamma at all levels and all the practical methods of applying it, in a manner which was well reasoned, most impressive and heart reaching. Those who had received enough training from him and who wished to increase their efforts on their own would respectfully take leave of him and go out to find a place that was secluded and peaceful. Each would choose a district which suited his temperament and then find a place to stay. In other words, those who liked staying in hilly country, for example, would make for such a district and find a suitable place to stay and practise which was to their liking. But it is most important that there should be water available for washing, drinking and other uses and this must not be lacking, for one can fast and go without food for several days at a time, but one cannot go without water; and water, unlike food, does not load down the body so that it becomes an enemy to the heart's work. So there is no need to give up taking water which would only cause unnecessary hardship for water is most essential to the existence of the body.

Therefore, the search for a suitable place to work must take into account whether water is available as a prime consideration. Even if one must obtain it from a source as far as one kilometre away, it is still satisfactory, for it is not very difficult to carry it that far. As for the almsround, if there is a village of more than about four houses it is quite enough for a single *Dhutanga Bhikkhu*. This is not really a problem because a *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* is not concerned normally whether the food is sweet or savoury or whatever else. For whatever he gets on *piṇḍapāta* he is satisfied with, even if it is only plain rice with nothing else for days. Because at times he has fasted and at times had plenty until he has become used to it.

This may sound like boasting, but it is true and accords with what is experienced daily by those living the way of *kammaṭṭhāna*. I also have experienced and grown accustomed to this way of life, but I never found any revulsion for

it arising in me. Sometimes there is reason to speak in a boastful way to one's followers about one's poverty and lack of things even though people in the world tend to feel ashamed of such a state. People generally dislike talking about their own or their family's poverty and lack of things for it is considered to be very shameful. But amongst *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* one can boast about it without fear that anyone is going to laugh at you.

I can write about this without any feeling of shame because the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu's* way of life has been a life of poverty and paucity since the time of the teacher who started the lineage. It was Venerable Ajaan Mun who founded the present lineage by going this way himself to start with. Then it was taken up by his followers and by their followers who tend to practise the way of abstention and hardship.

Being ready to accept some hunger patiently and willingly comes from the work of developing the heart, and the heart is found to be much more at ease than when one takes food in the usual way. The body and heart are then far less sluggish and inert — for those are the characteristics of laziness which is all embracing and which leaves one with no desire to do any work on the way of the heart in any direction. The end result of this is to let the heart go its own way — eating plenty under the influence of craving (*taṇhā*) which is in command. On such a day one neither wants to see or think about the place for doing the walking practice, for one just wants to lay down with one's head close to the pillow — and if one lies down all day, this is just what the "big boss" wants. To persist in writing a lot is to advertise oneself a lot as being a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* of special importance on that subject — so it is best to stop at this point.

When one thinks about it, the hearts of *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* of other people and of ourselves are probably very similar. The more we are allowed to go according to our desires the more we like it and have fun thinking about all sorts of things without end and without taking note of any facts or science or text books at all. The whole story is the story of hell and we are satisfied to open and read this story by day and night, all the time without ever getting bored or satiated with it. As if that was not sufficient, we are even bold enough to grab the power to take hell as our playground where we can have fun and laughter without any concern or fear of the Lord of Hell. This is what can happen when the *kilesas* take charge of the heart.

The *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* uses various ways to discipline his audacious heart; sometimes by going on fast, or by abstaining from lying down, by going up into the hills, staying in a cave or under overhanging cliffs, and sometimes he sits in *samādhi* to discipline his desire to indulge in thinking and imagining. He must use whatever method he can to discipline his heart and overcome its obstinate refusal to give way; enough so that he can relax and live contentedly from day to day.

Generally speaking, until they have attained a higher level of the *citta* which brings constant satisfaction to them, they will probably train it in the way that has been described above. In particular, I have seen Venerable Ajaan Mun recommend to those who followed him to go and practise in this way. When they left him these Bhikkhus would then go up into the hills or into a cave for the purpose of training the heart in the ways which I have described here.

Some nights they didn't lie down to sleep and rest the body at all because the *citta* liked to go wandering and they had to work at *samādhi bhāvanā* so as to tie it down. But when they went up into the hills they were also bound to rely on those things which arouse fear to help them subdue and discipline the *citta* — such as tigers! Animals such as this are considered to be very effective in disciplining the *citta* of the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu*. As soon as he hears only one roar on the side of that hill over there the heart gets ready to submit and stay close by, not daring to display any of its playful fantasies as it usually does.

Sometimes the roar of this great teacher who is so strong and powerful, breaks out close by. Then it seems as if one forgets to breathe and immediately one forgets the theme of the *kilesas* which have been indulging in wild fantasies with abandoned playfulness. They all disappear entirely and all that remains is fear and a shivering body. Sometimes, because of the intense fear, it seems as if one's breath really does stop and although the weather is cold, the body gets hot and soaked with sweat. This is most appropriate for a *citta* which is so bold and stubborn and which does not want to listen to the sound of Dhamma and its meaning and which refuses to be taught. But now, all at once the *citta* is ready to believe in the Buddha and to submit to the extent of entrusting one's life into the hands of the Lord immediately. One is not then likely to go on thinking about the tigers any more, because to force oneself to think at all would increase the fear so much that one could go mad.

The fear of going mad and the fear of death are very powerful influences which then force one to turn the mind to "BUDDHO", "BUDDHO" *internally; and having done this*

for a long time, the word "Buddho" *and the heart can become infused together as one. From then on, the heart starts to become quiet and still until there remains only the one state of knowing and nothing else.* All fear disappears, as though it had been plucked off and thrown away, and in place of it, courage and boldness arise without any thought of fear or of anything in the whole universe.

Then, the *citta* sees in a heartfelt way how baneful a thing is this fear of tigers and also how great is the value of the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the *Sangha.* The heart is then stable, no longer wavering, vacillating and going back and forth in association with any objects which tend to arouse an emotional response *(ārammaṇa).* What remains is a calm happy state and a heart which is full of courage and firm strength so that the *citta* can change round completely and become an intimate friend of its enemy — the tiger. In fact one even feels that one would like to jump on its back and play with it, as with an intimate friend, without thinking whether it would do one any harm in the way one had thought before when one was so afraid. It also seems as if the heart can be a friend of all the living beings in the forest without a thought that any of the animals or any of the more mysterious things could be bold enough to be a danger to one. In fact one thinks that the various wild animals truly cannot do any harm to one. Because the one that would do the harm is the *citta* (of the animal) which initiates the thought which leads to action, but now, one's own *citta* has power over them which will tend to weaken their power and the strength of their will.

Wherever he stays, whether in the forest, in the hills, under an overhanging cliff, in jungle, on a mountain side or various forest dwellings, generally speaking the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* will look for a place that arouses fear in order to help him to arouse the effort to do his work more easily. Wild animals, such as tigers, are very effective in helping him to arouse effort and therefore he likes them, while at the same time being very afraid of them. He likes tigers because they help to arouse fear very quickly. Merely seeing their footprints on a path, in front of a cave or elsewhere causes the dormant fear which is deep within him to arise immediately, making for a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty in the place where he is staying. Then, whatever he is doing, the whole time he feels as if they are about to visit him, so his heart remains in a state of watchfulness. As soon as the state of watchfulness has arisen, the state of diligent striving is already within him. *Because, when he is afraid, his heart must turn and recollect Dhamma as his refuge, or use whatever*

opposes and limits that fear at the same time as it arises. However long he goes on recalling Dhamma, he will be doing work which increases the strength of his mindfulness, wisdom and diligence in all ways.

Therefore, whether they like tigers or fear them, for those who have the intention to gain the teaching of Dhamma from them, both are things which support and promote this purpose. So they immediately gain strength of heart from them whenever they are present — even though one would hardly think that such a thing was possible, but the fact of the matter is that many *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* have gained results in this way. All of this is due to the courage that comes from renunciation. If one is going to die, then so be it, for at that moment of time one has no regrets about one's life.

When we are truly up against it with no way out and we cannot find any other refuge, we must try and think of how to help ourselves. Dhamma is by nature the most valuable and productive refuge and when we submit to it and it enters our hearts as the refuge of the heart, then at any time when we are in the greatest need of a refuge the Dhamma gives results which show themselves to us, immediately right before our eyes and in the heart, which gives us no room for doubt whatsoever.

Even though those who have never done this nor experienced anything of this sort may doubt it and say that it is impossible *yet someone who has himself done it has the experience of it clearly and obviously evident to himself, even though others may neither agree nor accept it. Which of them is right is for the critics to decide. But the one who has experienced these things with his own heart is not likely to criticise them.*

This is what really matters, for those things which one has clearly experienced for oneself are beyond question to oneself — such as the experience of Dhamma of the Lord Buddha to a greater or lesser extent. For the Lord and the Sāvakas there is no question of doubt anywhere in any of its aspects, but for someone who has not yet had any experience to confirm it there is no way to avoid some doubts arising. Thus for example, the Dhamma teachings that: "The Noble Truths are true things, good and evil are true things, the heavens and hells truly exist, and *Nibbāna* is true". In the special case of the Lord and the *Sāvakas*, they have no doubts because they have the experience and are enlightened. For others who have no experience, it is likely that questions, doubts and arguments will arise. *But, for those who have the experience for themselves, all questions cease automatically.*

Summarising the above: the whole of the Dhamma which the Lord Buddha revealed with complete truth has come down both to those who experienced it as it is, and they have complete faith and submit their lives to Dhamma, and also to those who neither know, see nor believe and who deny that Dhamma is truth. Since the time of the Lord, right up to the present, nobody has been able to display objectively what is the truth of this. Because Dhamma is not like external objects in the world whose nature can be determined by picking them up and examining them. For it can only be experienced with *"sandiṭṭhiko"* (knowing by one's own direct experience) in accordance with the natural ability of each person who does the practice and works it out for himself. Therefore, the results which come from the training and discipline which each person undertakes are not common property which can be shared by others who have not worked to find out the truth which is within the ability of human beings to do, each one for himself.

The *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who trains himself by putting his life at risk should do this as a way to test the truth of both himself and Dhamma. By doing this he will not exceed the limits of what is taught in the traditional Buddhist teachings *(Sāsana–Dhamma). For what has been described above are the methods by which Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus have always tended to train themselves and the practices which are variously seen to be suited to the characteristics of each one individually. As well as the corresponding results which thereby come to them. They do not act in a haphazard way and this is not written in a merely speculative way, for even I who am writing this have struggled up by the methods which are described here.*

Those who practise and who follow this way have variously progressed and seen the results of it in accordance with their strength, which are enough to give proof and confirmation to them that:

> "The self-training and discipline by the various methods mentioned here is not worthless, such that causes are done without any of the promised results coming in response to them. But they are forms of practice that are full of meaning, or in other words, the results which one rightly hopes for are those which are accepted as normal in the field of practice of those whose practice is always excellent and impeccable."

Nowadays many people say that the Lord Buddha has gone into final Enlightenment *(Parinibbāna)* and that the Path, Fruit and Enlightenment have accordingly been influenced so that they are not able to bring forth

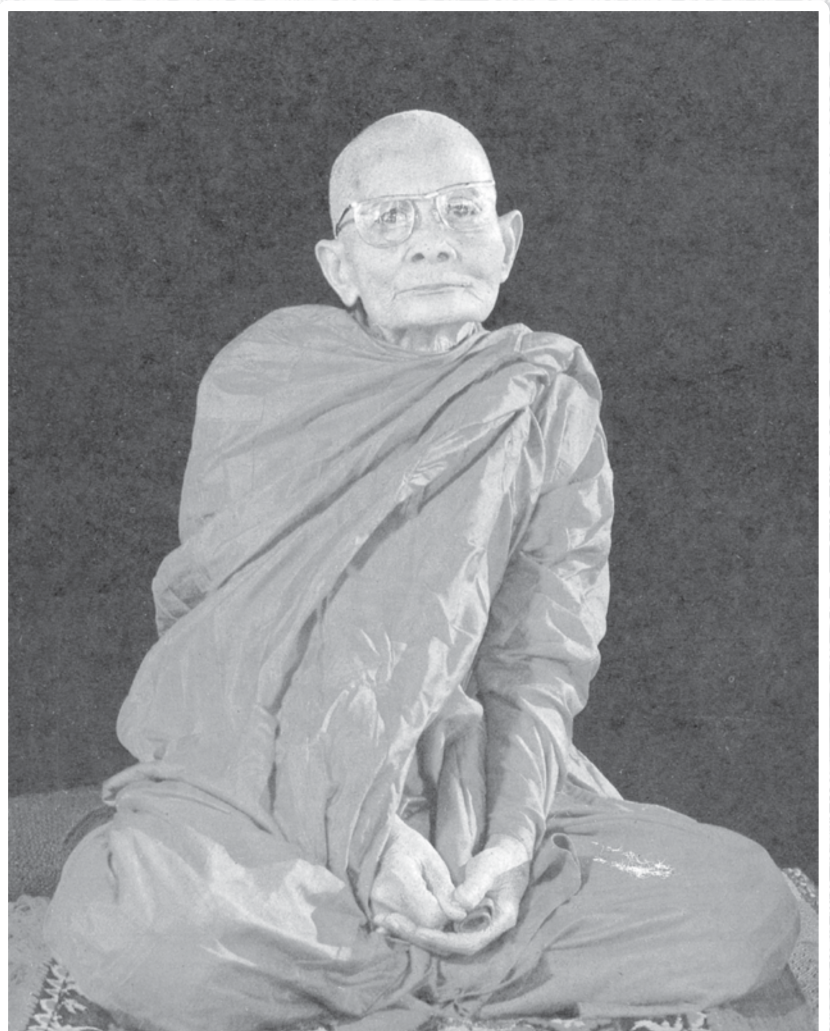
their flower and fruit fully to those who practise the way as *"Dhammānu Dhammapaṭipanno"*:

> *"Those who practise Dhamma in the proper way in accordance with Dhamma are said by the Lord to be those who give praise to the Tathāgata."*

But such views as this are not to be found in the "well taught" *(svākkhāta)* Dhamma nor will they ever be part of the Dhamma of the Lord. Because there is no absolute and sacred power apart from Dhamma, which has been "well taught". And Dhamma is that nature which gives equality to all things. Therefore, those who have faith in Dhamma as their basis do not remain inactive and careless in striving to search for the attainment of virtue for themselves. From the first steps right up to the final cessation of *dukkha* they work with effort in various ways in accordance with their strength and the direction in which their abilities lie.

Amongst all the various methods, the *Dhutanga Bhikkhu* will most likely search for a way to cure or to restrain the defilements *(kilesa)* within him step by step in whatever way he has the most ability. Thus for instance one who is timid may use the method of taking the tigers as his teacher, to help him in his training and discipline, by making the effort to go into the forests and hills which are fearful places and a suitable battleground for getting rid of the fear in his heart — which is one of the most important *kilesas.*

It is normal for the feelings of the *citta* to change in accordance with the endless things that it contacts. Thus, living in a village or a town with many men and women causes it to have feelings of one sort. But going to live in wild hills and jungles or in lonely places such as a cremation ground or forests where there are many tigers causes different kinds of feelings to arise.



Venerable Ajaan Wairn

2

Training the Mind

It is necessary to have many different methods and ways of training and constraining the *citta* in order to be competent to deal with the deceptive tricks of the many different kinds of *kilesas* which dwell in the *citta* and which display themselves in all situations and in different ways according to type. If one is observant one will see that the *citta* is the meeting place of all affairs and this causes one much disturbance so that one can never have any time to be quiet and relax even for a moment. In general, these affairs are of a low, unworthy nature, which lay in wait to draw and divert one's activities in their direction and they hardly have anything of the teaching of Dhamma within them which could bring one some calm and peace of heart.

So one who intends to find out everything that is false and true must be a person who observes the *citta* and who trains and disciplines the *citta* in various different ways. The Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* are the most excellent examples of this to all of us who practise the way, for they liked to stay in the forest until they became used to it.

In truth, the feelings of all people are likely to be much the same, for nobody by himself would normally like to go and live in the forests, hills or lonely places that nobody in the world wants. But the Bhikkhu only thinks about and does this because he has the purpose of becoming a good and worthy person with faith and confidence in himself with thoughts and actions that he sees will be of value to himself and others. Therefore he goes against his inclinations of heart and does it in the same way that people everywhere in the world do their work, for in truth, nobody likes to do things that are difficult both physically and mentally. But they have to do it because the necessity of it compels them — and so they have to run around busily, everywhere in the world, instead of just eating, living, sleeping and lying down which is their natural inclination.

But the difficulty of training the *citta* is much greater, and those who have never done it should not try to compare it with the difficulties in doing other tasks in the world. For if the time comes that one does the work of training the *citta,* one may not be able to put up with the difficulty of it and one may call it "torture" or an imposition. Then one may lose interest in going on with this work without ever considering the results which will come from it and how wonderful and miraculous they are.

At this point one may have seen enough of the strength and tenacity of the *kilesas* which are the overlords ruling the heart to realise more and more how much tenacity and resistance they have and how much they oppose and torment beings in the world. Because training the *citta* is just the work of eliminating or driving out the *kilesas* from the heart. But the one who drives them out does not want to do so, for the one[24] who has for ages been the overlord, having power over the hearts of people and other beings, does not want to go. Because to go and live elsewhere is not so easy as living over the heart of a person where it gets such affectionate treatment and lavish care all the time and where it is not likely to go wanting or be hard up for anything.

If it wants to admire forms, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings and mental perceptions *(ārammaṇa)* of any kind, the one who is acting as the servant of the *kilesas* immediately runs about searching for these things to gratify them without delay. However much the cost or the credit payment, the pleasure of it satisfies the craving and the accounts can be left to be thought about later.

Thinking out and paying the accounts is the work and the duty of the one who underwrites everything, but the Chief who has the power makes no complaint and is not the least troubled by this. In such a situation, who can make his heart so hard and from where can he get the steel resolve to be able to train the *citta* with the thought of driving out the *kilesas* — those lords who are so eloquent — from the heart?

Therefore training the *citta* so as to know and see with true mindfulness and wisdom, that the *kilesas* are the enemy of the heart is a difficult training and the most difficult thing to see. In fact one should call the work of training the *citta* to torment the *kilesas* "a life and death struggle". This work is not play, nor is it fun like sports on a playing field, and all of those who are able to know what the *kilesas* look like, destroy them so that they die from the heart. This means, such people as the Lord Buddha and they are therefore special people. If with us ordinary people there arises the ability to destroy

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24. *Avijjā:* Blind unknowing.

the *kilesas* so that they die from the heart, even if we do not become special people like the Lord, we must be special in the field of all the *kilesas*. For if the wonder of the ability to destroy the *kilesas* and the wonder of the *citta* which has gone beyond the power of the *kilesas* is within any person, such a worthy person is beyond the world.

Striving, in all its aspects for the purpose of capsizing the *"Round of Saṁsāra" (vaṭṭa)* which is imposed on the heart is therefore a task which is full of difficulties and torments in every way. The *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who opposes his natural inclinations and goes to stay in places of hardship to train himself, such as the wild forests and hills, is thus like someone living in a prison. Before he can free himself from the shackles of each of the *kilesas* he must go to the limit — "make or break".

Training the *citta* for the real truth of Dhamma is as difficult as this. Not only does he live under self-discipline but his mode of eating food is also a discipline. Because it is also an aspect of the work that he is doing and one who is anxious to pass through and get free from the jungle of darkness and obscurity will strive to apply the discipline to develop virtue in this direction also.

When eating food, even though he may be very hungry and feel like eating a lot, after he has thought and taken Dhamma into consideration he will be sure to restrain and resign himself to eating only a little — enough to provide a balance between the needs of the body and of the *citta* — and he will try to make it his constant practice to eat that small amount which suits his needs.

If he should increase the amounts he takes on some occasions he must be fully aware of it at the time, not forgetting himself. But by alternating and taking more at times and less at others, the body and mind can be kept in balance without becoming too exhausted or getting sick, which would spoil the work. Thus the *citta* will at least be in balance and will develop steadily in accordance with the amount of work which is being done continually to promote it.

If his ability is enough and his characteristics of perfection *(vāsanā–pāramī)* are well developed, he can go beyond to what his heart is intent upon. Because each method of working in the direction of Dhamma aids his development, so those who find that going on fast is to their liking and accords with their nature, will try to alternate fasting, eating fully and eating little for longer or shorter periods as they see fit.

The *citta* then stirs up effort every time it has an opportunity. Meanwhile the physical body will be weakened so that his work may go ahead with facility and so that the *citta* may steadily go on increasing in evenness and clarity. Then the way of *samādhi* will strengthen when the time is appropriate for it. And the way of wisdom will be active, and depending on the situation it will alternate with *samādhi*.

Those Bhikkhus who stay in the forest, in the hills, under an overhanging cliff or in various other places, and those who reduce their intake of food, or who fast, all have Dhamma as the firm aim of the *citta*, and in their various ways they are all working and striving in the direction of *samādhi bhāvanā* in their various situations and activities. They are also constantly watchful of the changes of heart that take place in association with objects that cause emotional reactions *(ārammaṇa)*.

When the heart is consistently brought up and looked after in the right way, it will steadily develop. Then *samādhi* will develop and become firm and wisdom will become more skilful and widespread every time it is used. Things which were never known before become known, never seen before are seen and never existed before then arise in the heart which is continually searching for the truth wholeheartedly with complete commitment. Then the laziness and weakness, the distraction and instability, the confusion, restlessness, darkness and obscurity which are normally always present in the ordinary *citta* gradually fade away day by day, until it can be seen clearly how much they have disappeared. But in particular, for those who discipline the heart by means of fear, for those who fast for many days, depending on their suitability for this practice, and also for those who discipline themselves by sitting for a long time and investigating the resulting painful feelings *(dukkha–vedanā)* as the object of attention *(ārammaṇa)*, the results which they get from each of these three methods are unusually wonderful and far more so than come from other forms of discipline. But they will be explained later on as the occasion demands.

Here, we will describe the general way in which the Bhikkhus practise. The way in which they train and discipline their hearts by the foregoing methods, depends on the technique which each individual thinks out for himself to train himself and this is different for each person. Some of them, as well as going to

live in fearful forests and hills, also think up special methods to suit the time, place and circumstances and increase their effectiveness. Thus for example; in such a place at night, when fear arises in the *citta* they may go and walk in another part of the forest, in order to discipline the fear which was getting stronger, by going and sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* on a rock on top of a hill or in the open, or by walking *caṅkama* in various places where large tigers pass by, and doing this for a long time.

At the same time, the *citta* examines the nature of fear and death, and it also looks into the nature of tigers, which the *citta* assumes to be so frightening, and the nature of oneself by asking in what way the tiger is so different that one should be so afraid? One must investigate this by dividing up the different parts and comparing these things which the *citta* thinks are so different. Thus for example:

> "What is it that the tiger has that is frightening? What about its teeth? I also have teeth. What about its claws? I also have nails. Its hair? I also have hair. Its head? … Its body? … Its eyes? … Its stripes? I also have tattoos and birth marks. As for its tail, even the tiger itself is not afraid of it, so why should I be?"
>
> "As far as the heart of the tiger and my own heart are concerned, they are both alike — indeed my heart is that of a man, a Bhikkhu, which has a much higher value. Even though the various parts of the body are not identically the same, yet the elements of which they are made are the same and there is not enough difference between the tiger and myself to justify this fear of each other."
>
> "The heart of the tiger is the heart of an animal whereas my heart is the heart of a Bhikkhu with Dhamma in it, so it has value and power far beyond that of a tiger. Why then should I turn round and lower my value and status as a Bhikkhu by being afraid of a tiger which is only an animal? Is this not degrading to one who is a complete Bhikkhu?"
>
> "Furthermore the *Sāsana* has such wonderful excellence throughout the "three worlds", but in it there is a Bhikkhu who is timid and frightened, who is a blemish on it, who stains it and gives it a bad name and who also degrades it. To degrade the *Sāsana,* which is the priceless treasure of the "three worlds" by being more concerned for one's life than for Dhamma is not right and proper, and if I am to die I would do so in bad spirits and stupid, without any dignity in myself or in the circle of the *Sāsana* at all.

The *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who dies in this way is said to die in the manner of one who "sells" himself and one who "sells" the *Sāsana* and all those who practise the way everywhere. This is not dying in the manner of a warrior in battle who firmly believes in *kamma* and who courageously faces up to whatever is about to happen. I am a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* in all respects, and I ought not to die in such a way, but rather in the manner of a warrior, ending my life in battle with bravery and courage and this will be for the honour of myself and the *Sāsana* as a symbol for the world to uphold for a long time."

"I must think rightly and see clearly the nature of both the tiger and myself; all the parts of its body and of my own, as well as the fear of death which penetrates and possesses me inwardly. I must see this quite clearly with wisdom, not letting this fear inundate me and play with me and then pass by in vain for this would spoil my standing as a Son of the *Tathāgata* and as a full *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu*. So whatever happens I must fight to the end until I see either victory or defeat and life or death today. Whichever way it goes, whether the side which brings power and honour to me and credit to the *Sāsana,* or the side which destroys both myself and the *Sāsana* because of this fear, I shall know tonight — and now I must contemplate and investigate and go on working it out until it breaks apart."

> While the contemplation and analysis are going on, turning round and about sorting out the elements, the *khandhas,* fearlessness and fear and searching for the underlying principle of truth with meticulous care and a resolute heart, the heart begins to know and understand from the wisdom which is continually teaching it all the time without letting up. Until the heart goes quiet and peaceful and all the previous anxiety disappears, resulting in a state of calm and happiness. All the emotionally charged images based on memory *(saññā–ārammaṇa)* which one had formerly believed in, in various ways then disappear entirely, leaving only calm and happiness of the *citta* which appears noble and dignified. The *citta* then gains faith in the method of contemplation which is the cause of this state, and it sees that it truly is the way to get rid of confusion and the tendency to run about searching for excitement and trouble, and also fear. It also gains faith in the results which arise at that time, that:

> "This is a state of calm and happiness of a strange and unusual kind which I have never experienced before and I did this contemplation by taking fear as the motivating cause."

This is a method which the Bhikkhus use to get rid of fear, until they see the results of it for themselves. But in the beginning stages of training in the way of *kammaṭṭhāna* they use a preliminary meditation *(parikamma–bhāvanā)* on some aspect of Dhamma such as "Buddho" when a lot of fear arises, rather than the method of contemplation. This can result in the attainment of calm and the dispersal of fear in the same way, but it differs in that one gains no skilful or clever methods such as one gets from the way of contemplation.

Some Bhikkhus, when fear arises while they are sitting under the mosquito net, lift it up and sit without any cover. They put up with the bites of the gadflies and mosquitoes for nothing else matters but the resolve to practise their meditation using various methods to defeat the fear that is there at that time. Until they succeed. Then they stop and rest.

The citta which gains calm by training and discipline based on fear seems to gain a deeper more subtle state of calm which lasts much longer than the calm attained by the usual methods of meditation. While the *citta* is in the deepest state of calm, in the above example, it feels as if the body has completely disappeared, and the contact *(samphassa)* between the internal and external fields of sensation *(āyatana)* ceases until the *citta* draws away from this state, after which they start to function again as normal.

The state of the *citta* in which the functions of the fields of sensation cease, closely resembles a state of sleep although it is not the same thing, for when one sleeps nothing very strange and unusual happens. But when the *citta* is completely calm something very strange and unusual manifests and there is only "knowing"[25] in that state of calm at that time. The generally accepted results that come from normal sleep are different from the subtle state of calm-of-the-*citta* which those who practise get from their *samādhi* meditation. Those results always stick in mind and make them long for this state which is never tasteless or insipid.

It is results such as these that make those who have experienced them resolute and courageous in their methods of training and discipline which

25. The Thai original literally states: "…there is only 'know' in that state…"

they apply to themselves on future occasions by following the same pattern of practice, and they will never give in to fear however strongly it arises. In fact they will rather take fear as a reminder which prompts them to both overcome that fear and to grasp victory in order to be the master with honour and dignity, as they have done so before. This is the reason which induces them to search for frightening places in which to develop themselves, and the more frightening a place is, the more are they determined to go and stay in such a place and do their practice there. Because, even though the heart is displaying a bold, venturesome spirit, training it by means of fear until a fearless courage arises quite clearly, using the methods of mindfulness and wisdom which are competent to deal with all the tricks within it, is something that is most desirable to them.

When I said that these places are frightening, I mean this in truth because they are forests where tigers live and like to wander about searching for food, coming and going all the time. In some places, they wander about even in broad daylight, but much more so at night when these areas are their natural hunting ground and they are not afraid of people — which they are in the daytime. But in general they are just not very interested in people, but rather in animals, which they look on as their natural food. So even though they go back and forth round about where a Bhikkhu is staying, he would hardly know they were there unless they roar or growl. But it is a natural instinct of man to think of tigers as fierce wild animals and in those circumstances who could avoid thinking and being afraid of them. For as soon as he enters such a place a Bhikkhu knows very well that: "I have entered the Tigers' jungle!" Under such circumstances who could be so fearless as to stay there relaxed and at ease as if he was in an ordinary market place? He is bound to think of them with mistrust and fear all the time.

The skilled *Dhutanga Bhikkhu* is very skilled indeed and is worthy of a lot of respect and faith. When walking *caṅkama* and tigers roar in the area where he is staying, he still keeps on walking as if nothing had happened, and when later someone questions him about it he answers quite casually with good reasoning. So that when asked a question such as:

> "Tigers are fierce animals which can bite and eat both animals and men and I've often heard of them taking and eating people. How then can you walk *caṅkama* in such an unconcerned manner? Do you have a magic spell

so that the tiger can't open its mouth to eat people? If so, please teach it to me so that when I go into the forests and hills I need not fear the tigers and bears coming to eat me. Then I will be able to do my meditation at ease without fear, for the main difficulty in going to stay in forests and hills now is just because of fear. If I don't need to be afraid because I've got a magic spell to keep the tiger's mouth shut so it can't eat people I'll feel a lot more easy and comfortable."

He answers in an unassuming manner:

"The tiger was roaring over there whereas I was walking *caṅkama* here. It was several sen (1 sen = 40m) away or maybe a kilometre and what is the use of being afraid? If it had come to me, roaring and acting as if it were truly about to jump on me and take me away to eat, there would be enough cause to be afraid. Wherever I've been I've only heard the sound of them roaring in the languages of animals who have mouths, but I've never seen them acting in any way towards me that would warrant being afraid. As for magic spells, everybody has them if they would only make use of them, but for people like you, even if you went to learn such spells from Lady Vessuvaṇa in heaven, as soon as you went into the forest and just heard the roar of a tiger you would run for your life taking the magic spells with you. However powerful those spells may be, they would be carried away by a timid person afraid of death, running so hard that his robes fall off, and the spells would all be lost and forgotten. Even if I had any magic spells as a protection I would never think of giving them to someone like you, for I am afraid that you would take them and ruin them completely. However good a magic spell might be, if the person is incompetent, the spell cannot help in any way. Like someone who has a gun slung over his shoulder in case of danger. But when the time comes he doesn't know how to use it, so the gun is of no help to him."

"Here, we are just talking about tigers and ghosts and you have already started to get frightened and beginning to shiver. How then could you have the presence of mind to recall a magic spell to protect yourself? You would think only of running away which is so shameful that you would never forget it. I don't think in the same way as you, for if I did I would also have to go about learning magic methods and spells to subjugate tigers and various other animals without having any interest or concern for overcoming the

> fear which is an internal danger, so that it may be cured by various methods. Until finally I would just be an incompetent person without any self-esteem for the rest of my life."

When one thinks about it, it makes one ashamed that tigers should be more powerful than man. For many people are frightened of their power when they are just lying down or growling in their animal language, or having fun and playing together. One feels that a good tiger has many times more power than an incompetent person who wants to learn magic spells from such a Bhikkhu. But the answer they get should be a valuable lessen to them for a long time.

Previously the *citta* of such a Bhikkhu would have been accustomed to jumping about and running everywhere with bold obstinacy and without any bounds or limits, but when he has trained it with persistent effort until it submits and becomes docile and responsive to reason and the ways of Dhamma, he is not disturbed or frightened by the various things which happen to people and which they are always liable to meet up with. He can live anywhere or go anywhere whatever the conditions may be. In the forests and hills where timid people dare not go, he can live comfortably, and look on it as a place of refuge where he can relax, recover and develop the true practices of a Bhikkhu *(Samaṇa–Dhamma)* in a satisfactory way all the time. Those who are concerned to become good and developed people should thus take up the way of doing things of such a Bhikkhu as their own path, although it is not essential to go and live in the forests or hills like him. But the methods and means of training oneself in various activities and duties so that one shall become a good person with firmly established basic principles within, both in the present and the future, is something which can be taught and received from others. Otherwise the Lord Buddha would have had no way to proclaim Dhamma and teach the world, because nobody else has the ability to practise in the same way as the Lord. But there are those who take up the principles of Dhamma and then go and practise them as a follower of the Lord until they become the best of men. They are good people who uphold the traditions in the circle of Buddhist followers right up to the present day, and it is generally accepted that there are a very large number of them who have gained the results from doing the practices which come from the Lord in the manner of a pupil following a teacher.

The various methods of training and asceticism which each individual uses to develop his *citta* are chosen by each one depending on his need and ability. However, the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* in the lineage of Venerable Ajaan Mun have always followed his ways of practice without discarding any of them, right up to the present time.

Concerning the aforementioned Bhikkhu who found it hard to believe that the other Bhikkhu could walk *caṅkama* and be able to compete with the sound of tigers roaring, and thus thought that he had a magic spell to lock up the mouths of the tigers; in fact he genuinely thought like this, because he was very afraid of the tigers when he heard them roar in the vicinity of where he was staying, even though they did not come close to him. He therefore had to ask such a question.

When several Dhutanga Bhikkhus meet and talk Dhamma together on a suitable occasion, it is very interesting to listen to: for the Dhamma which comes from the heart and arises from the way of practice; for the asceticism and the types of ascetic training of the *citta* in various different ways; for the courage and fear which arise at various different times, and for the sufferings and difficulties at those times when the body is pushed to the limit of endurance. But the most important thing is the Dhamma within. This means the *samādhi* and wisdom which each one of them has experienced in his own way in various places. When they talk together about their experiences, each one from the ground level of his own *citta* and Dhamma, it is so absorbing that one forgets the time and the aches and pains of sitting on the floor for a long time.

> In some cases, but not many, a Bhikkhu talks of his *citta* dropping into a state of calm in three distinct stages to attain the full state of *samādhi.* Thus in the first stage it becomes mildly calm such that there is a relaxed well being. In the second stage the calm and well being increase in a manner that is clearly evident. When it gets to the third and final stage the body vanishes and it feels as if one has no body. The fields of sensation *(āyatana)* also cease to function, and there remains only "knowing" of a subtle and most wonderful kind which is beyond all description.

This is what they call the full ground of *samādhi* and it is the type which can form a firm and stable foundation for the *citta*. The heart which goes down into a complete state of calm at a ground level such as this will generally rest there for several hours before rising out of it. Sometimes it may stay there for as much as twelve hours. Some may wonder whether the body would not be very painful and stiff when the *citta* withdraws from *samādhi* after sitting in one posture without any change for many hours. What in fact happens to the *citta* and the *khandhas* is as follows.

> When the *citta* goes into a state of rest and calms down until it reaches full *samādhi* as related above, the *citta* and the body do not react to any disturbance from anything whatsoever. Then the integration of the *citta* and of the physical elements *(dhātu)* as they exist at that time are understood to be much more subtle than when one is in deep sleep. This is so, because, sometimes after sleeping for a long time, when one wakes one still feels aches and pains in those parts of the body upon which one was lying. But when the *citta* withdraws from this type of *samādhi,* there are no aches or pains of any sort at all, every part of the body being in its normal, natural state. This gives one good reason to believe in the truth about those Bhikkhus who are said to enter into "complete cessation" *(Nirodha–samāpatti)* for several days. For it is said that, firstly, they can in fact remain in *samādhi* for such a long time and secondly, their health and body remain normal without any weakness or harm from it whatsoever.

Dhamma talk amongst *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* generally revolves about the results of the practice which they have done which derives from the level of attainment that they have experienced, and also about the places where they have done the practice in various locations. This is the way in which the truth of their knowing and seeing by way of the heart is passed on to each other and it gives them all food for thought for a long time.

Their talk never concerns the world of *saṁsāra,* of business or politics, of gain or loss, love or hate, of anger, loathing, envy, vindictiveness, or jealousy, nor are they ever even suggested, for their only concern is the practice of Dhamma. However long they go on talking, which depends on what is necessary, it is a means of uplifting the *citta* of the listener, so that he "drinks" it in deeply and is permeated with Dhamma the whole way through.

This is a most excellent occasion which is well described in the saying of Dhamma: "*Kālena Dhammasākacchā etammaṅgalamuttamaṁ*" (Talk on Dhamma at the right time is the highest blessing). Because such talk is between those who are all practising the way and their aim is knowing what is true and seeing what is true and promoting truth, and not at all for boasting about degrees and levels of attainment, nor about how much one knows and how clever one is. Each one's *citta* is poised all the time, waiting and interested to hear the truth while each of the others is presenting it. But if any one of them, when talking, is seen to be deficient or mistaken in any point he is always ready to submit with genuine and heartfelt respect and to accept correction from one of the others whose ground of Dhamma is higher. Such talk is a way of checking the knowledge and understanding and the state of the *citta* of each other in connection with the attainment of *samādhi* and the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna (Magga–Phala–Nibbāna).*

When such Bhikkhus have full confidence in the value and wealth of practice of each other without feeling any doubts or reservations they can talk together intimately and reveal to each other all the Dhamma that they have within them without holding anything back or keeping anything secret. In this way, those who practise can get to know quite clearly what ground of Dhamma each of them has attained. This Bhikkhu has such and such a ground of *citta* and a ground of Dhamma; that one has a subtle *citta*; that one has a high level of wisdom; that one is close to going beyond becoming and birth whereas this one here has already gone beyond it and is free from all anxieties and can relax. As for this one here, he is lazy and weak in his meditation and when he sits in *samādhi* he just nods his head and sleeps inwardly. In fact wherever he sits he just sleeps inwardly, for this one is most skilled at sleeping inwardly. Therefore, amongst those who are *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* one should not assume that every one of them is entirely good. I also once became skilled at sleeping inwardly — but I don't like to boast about it.

This Bhikkhu here, his *citta* is steadily becoming calm; this one is beginning to develop into *samādhi;* this one has strange knowledge about external things such as the *Pretas,* Ghosts and *Devatās.* This one likes practising meditation while sitting down; that one likes practising while lying down; that one prefers meditating while standing. This one likes to discipline himself by not lying down; this one by reducing the amount of food he takes; this one by fasting. This one likes to discipline himself by going into the forests to look

for tigers or bears as a means to help him overcome fear, by examination and inquiry into it while using the tigers or bears as the cause of the fear. This one likes to discipline himself by walking about looking for tigers in the hills at night. This one likes to receive mysterious guests such as those who have *Deva* bodies.

But this one here is afraid of ghosts and *Pretas* as if his parents had brought him up in a house of such beings and dead bodies about the place to scare and haunt him all the time, so that after he was ordained he was in the habit of being afraid of *Pretas.* This one here has a nature which easily accepts and believes anything which anyone says and he does not like to think it over first to see if it is reasonable before accepting it. Whereas this one here has a lot of opinions and does not readily agree with other people.

This one has a nature to be clever and every time he likes to examine and think well about things before accepting them and he does not believe blindly. When the *Ācariya* teaches them Dhamma, after he has finished his talk, a Bhikkhu of this kind will probably have various questions in his heart which he will ask the *Ācariya* and a dialogue then takes place between them based on reason. The others who were present would thus be enabled to increase their own knowledge and ability in many ways by hearing this dialogue; and this is a good method of assisting those who are practising the way, to develop their mindfulness and wisdom. Such a person is an ornament to those who accompany him, he gives dignity to the circle of those who practise the way and he gives a feeling of confidence to the *Ācariya* who trains and teaches them. Wherever he goes and whatever Bhikkhu he stays with, everyone feels confident and assured about such a person. When he goes to stay on his own he endeavours to look after himself properly by using reason and Dhamma, without doing anything that would lead to deterioration or loss to his friends and associates who practise Dhamma. When contacting lay people he acts in a proper and seemly way, never getting too involved with them, for in the field of *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* this kind of thing is always liable to creep in. Although, generally speaking this is not done intentionally, yet a lack of skill and carefulness of one kind can also cause loss of virtue of another kind.

Another thing which is always likely to occur in those who practise happens when the *citta* attains *samādhi,* for then it becomes calm, firm and is not

distracted or upset by the world. The heart then tends to become unusually eloquent and witty, which can easily cause the one who practises to forget himself. He may then think that he has become skilled although in fact he is not. For he only begins to gain some skill if he first tries to work at the practice without forgetting himself.

But those who practise, generally forget themselves in this way more than any other, because they have never known such a thing to happen before. For this is the first step of virtue, calm, happiness of heart and stability of heart which is attained by those who practise and therefore it makes them excited so that they can forget themselves.

If then, there is nobody to warn such a person he may become self-confident in the manner of someone who knows Dhamma, and having the conceit that: "Dhamma has arisen!" The eloquence can then develop into giving clever Dhamma talks; and later he may think that he is skilful at such talks and that Dhamma has developed in his heart. However much he talks, the Dhamma flows out more and more, as though it were water in flood, without limitation or restraint until finally he becomes engrossed in talking and goes on incessantly. Before he realises it many hours have passed by in talking or giving a discourse on Dhamma, and this happens every time.

In making contact with people he has no idea of time, whether it is appropriate to speak, or when to stop, and his discourses have no ending, no *"evaṁ"*. However much Dhamma he has in him he digs it out to speak and discourse to whoever comes to see him until it is all out, without knowing why they have come. He just shares out Dhamma without any restraint, regrets or thrift, and even though there is not a lot of Dhamma in his heart he still likes to spread it about to his hearts content. He keeps spreading it about without developing it and protecting it by working at the practice, which would act as a dam to prevent the Dhamma in the heart from flowing out, but instead he does damage to it by not knowing when he has gone too far. Even the level of the water in the ocean can drop; and the heart that is neglected so that no work is done to develop Dhamma in it with little time being given to it, is bound to go the way of deterioration and to drop in level. So the *citta* which "shares itself out" much without also doing any work on its own development is bound to deteriorate and go lower and lower all the time until there is nothing left in it at all.

Finally all that remains is distracted thoughts and vexation throughout his entire mind. If he tries to make it settle it will not remain still and he

cannot lead it into a state of calm as he once used to. From having been calm and cool, his mind then changes and becomes conceited, vain, flirtatious, disturbed and gloomy and whether standing, walking, sitting, lying down, or in any other position it is as if his heart is on fire and he cannot find any calm and peace. When he cannot find any way of escape he thinks then of going with the fire, which is the way to make the situation still worse although he does not realise this. Thus he thinks:

> "When there is only vexation, disturbance and disquietude like this all the time, why should I remain in robes and be a burden on the *Sāsana?* It is better to give up the robe, for I see no value in going on like this. I must disrobe so as to get free from the anxiety which comes from emotional troubles of this kind and thoughts which have not been auspicious all the time since I became a monk."

But even after giving up the robe, such a person will not become auspicious by this type of thinking and will still be lacking in virtue as he was before and useless as he was at first. In saying that he would lighten the burden on the *Sāsana* when he gives up the robe, this is not so, for the *Sāsana* will be no lighter, and in fact it will just be the *Sāsana* upholding the truth as it always has.

Summarising this; the one who is not good is "self", the one that is no use is "self" and the heavy-heartedness due to wrong doing of the heart is "self". This should teach one that whatever kind of wealth one has, if one only spends it and disburses it without saving and replenishment it will diminish and finally vanish. The same is true if the heart is allowed to drift and go according to its fate, the result will be trouble and vexation which one must oneself receive everywhere and at all times. Because moral actions — good and evil — are not the fortune of just anybody, but only of the one who has done them and he alone is the only one that can receive the results of them.

The Lord therefore taught that one should be very careful and well guarded and not abandon oneself to one's emotional impulses. For when the bad results of one's actions have come upon one they make for great hardship, because these results are far more heavy than a range of a hundred mountains. Wise men are therefore afraid of them and have always taught that one should be afraid of evil and this they still teach right up to the present day due to the fact that they know clearly that the results of *kamma* both good and evil are not things which change and alter from age to age.

In the manner described above, the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* from the most senior to the most junior can know the ground of the *citta* of each other without the need for insight knowledge *(ñāṇa)* to find out by going deep down inwardly. Because these Dhamma discussions that take place amongst *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* are reckoned by them to be very important, and they take place regularly all the time. For they look on them as a means of exchanging knowledge and experience with each other and as a means of *"Sammodanīyagatha"* — "arousing joy and inspiration" in the Dhamma which they have variously practised and experienced.

When the occasion arises for them to talk together it is up to any of those who are present to speak of something which he has come to know, which may be more or less gross or subtle. Then, while they are talking one has an opportunity to know about them. But when two of the *Ācariyas* talk together, the more exalted they are the more interesting it is. Their Dhamma is all at a profound and high level and it leaves one with a sense of wonder. One feels so inferior and ashamed at one's own meagre ability *(vāsanā)* in mindfulness and wisdom, that one wants to go and bury one's head in the ground, for one is quite incapable of experiencing the kind of thing that they have experienced.

While listening to the *Ācariyas* talking together it is fascinating and wonderful and one feels so strongly that one wants to know and to see in the way that they do. One feels almost as though one's heart would break, but where has the mindfulness and wisdom been buried which should enable one to experience as they do? One doesn't know! Even if one looks for it in one's thoughts, one searches for it in vain. For all is dark and obscure, as if nothing good or special will ever happen which would satisfy and bring some joy to one's heart for the rest of one's life, so that one will die with this corpse full of stupidity, in vain.

Looking at the others who are also there listening, they seem to be so dignified and calm. As if they were flying towards the complete destruction of their *kilesas,* leaving one behind, oneself who is so incompetent that one cannot find the mindfulness and wisdom to save oneself, and leaving one to die alone submerged in the round of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa).* The more one thinks the more one's chest feels constricted and the heart apprehensive, as if it had been thrown out into the jungle, desolate and lonely.

As soon as the Dhamma meeting is over one quietly goes and asks the others who were present:

> "After listening to the talk on Dhamma how do you feel about it? For I felt almost as if my heart would break and I would die on the spot; the Dhamma which they talked was so amazing and wonderful that when I reflected and looked at myself I seemed to be like a crow perched on top of a golden mountain. When I thought about it I wanted to bury this corpse in the ground to get rid of it, thinking that this would probably lighten the load on the *Sāsana* by relieving it of the dead weight of an unfortunate member lacking in inherent ability, as I am at present. But how was it with you and the others who were present, how did you feel about it? Please tell me truly so that I can use it as a lesson in Dhamma which will enable me to breathe more freely and to get rid of this feeling of depression and hopelessness, as if my heart was about to break."

Generally those who speak up have much the same sort of thing to say because each of them feels a great satisfaction in the Dhamma of the *Ācariyas*. Then they turn and reflect on themselves, for they want to be like that also, but when the essential conditions *(hetu–paccaya)* for this are not there, disappointment arises. This then results in feelings of discontent (*dukkha*) in various ways, but as soon as they hear the same story from the others who are also learning and training in the way of Dhamma, they feel relieved and breathe more freely. Then they become determined to go on training themselves without being anxious and afraid that they will not be able to do so or will not be able to attain this or that state, which is an unnecessary way of hurting oneself.

Where we previously discussed how some Dhutanga Bhikkhus are daring enough to put their lives at stake by going and sitting after dark in those places where tigers roam about in search of food; and how some Bhikkhus also do such things as wandering about at night on the hills searching for tigers; this may make some people doubtful or make them disbelieve that it is so. Because such things may make one question:

> "For what reason should Bhikkhus sit in such places or go about looking for tigers? Even just sitting in the vicinity of his dwelling place is enough to make someone who is timid, so frightened that he can hardly breathe, so why should he use such excessively daring methods? For the ordinary monk would never go to such an extreme — unless he was a bit mad."

And in truth this is how it should be. But the stories of some Bhikkhus contradict this, for they overcome the fear that arises when sitting in the vicinity of their dwelling place, in the same way as they do when sitting or walking on the hills where tigers live.

However, the fear that arises when one is alone and close to one's dwelling place is of one kind and a suitable method may be used to overcome it. But the fear which they are searching for in various ways such as going to the mountains and sitting on a rock, or searching for tigers, is incredibly strong, much more so than the fear that arises on one's own near one's dwelling. If they had no effective method of overcoming the fear it is quite likely that they would go mad when they actually met up with a tiger. Therefore, they must use a very different method to quell this fear until it can be completely vanquished by the skilful method which each individual devises to train and discipline himself.

To train the *citta* when it is afflicted with fear up to the point where it can get rid of its stubborn resistance by means of skilful methods which are well suited to the circumstances, is a very important thing. The results which become apparent as soon as the *citta* surrenders to mindfulness and wisdom are wonderful beyond all expectations:

> *First,* the heart turns round and becomes bold and daring as soon as the fear has been dispelled by those skilful and effective methods, after which the *citta* remains completely calm without any fear whatsoever. *Second,* when the *citta* withdraws from this state, the bold fearlessness still remains without going back to the previous state of fear. *Third,* this acts as evident proof to one's heart, showing very clearly how the *citta* can be forced by disciplinary training to give up its stubborn resistance with the support and aid of various conditions such as fear. *Fourth,* one feels satisfaction in training oneself by that method or any other with skilfulness of heart, and is not afraid of death.

Even in training themselves by other methods, it should be understood that these Bhikkhus do so with the confidence of having seen results from what they have already done. This makes them go on increasing their efforts to progress in the development of the *citta* and Dhamma in the heart until they reach the goal that the heart longs for.

In consequence, the training of the heart, or of oneself, which the Dhutanga Bhikkhus undertake is of many different kinds, to suit their different temperaments. But gener-

ally, the methods which each of them use are those which have given them results in the past and they must therefore go on working at those methods constantly, rather than any others.

People's characters differ and there are some whose *citta* loses all mindfulness, which is required for self-control, as soon as fear arises and they become as if hypnotised and the same thing happens to them every time, regardless of what it is they are afraid of. Such people are not suited to the methods of training which use frightening situations for this could cause them to go mad.

So the type of ascetic training which is used, must take into account the character of each person and which methods suit them and enable them to gain strength of heart. One should not just take up a method that one has heard about as giving good results without taking into consideration the nature of one's own *citta*, for by doing this one is liable to get results which are not what they should be.

This is said, not for the purpose of increasing the weakness or feebleness in those who practise the way, but only to point out that what one does should be suitable so that one will gain value from it in accordance with one's state or condition. For when they come across this passage, some people might think that whatever they find to be tedious, difficult and against the grain is not suitable. Thus:

> "It is not suited to my character to be doing such things, because someone of my type is suited to living comfortably and there is no need for me to have fear of various kinds to hit me in the heart. I can live eating and sleeping comfortably which is a much better way and suits my character which likes comfort."

But one should recall how the Lord Buddha — the first Bhikkhu and *Arahant,* who is the "refuge" of the world — was able to attain Enlightenment and the fulfilment of Dhamma by strict training and discipline more than by any of those other methods which lazy and feeble people call good. *Nobody has ever got to the fulfilment of Dhamma by the way of living, eating and sleeping as the heart desires without ever opposing the citta and applying disciplinary training to the heart.*

These forceful methods of training have been described, based on the understanding that the *kilesas* of people are only likely to be afraid of being overpowered by vigorous training, rather than by letting the heart go wherever it will. If one uses some force, it will submit a little, enough to open one's eyes

and breathe freely. But if one gives way and goes along with them a little, they gain encouragement and the situation deteriorates greatly.

One must use many ways and means of discipline and training to frighten the *kilesas* in order to gain some peace, and those who want to see the submission of the *kilesas* for themselves must take up and use these strong methods as the tools of training and discipline in ways that are appropriate to their individual characters. This may be a way for them to bypass the *kilesas* from time to time and to weaken and eliminate them bit by bit. This will also reduce the discontent which torments the heart step by step until they reach the place of safety which is the "territory" of happiness and joy, by using these methods to help them.

Those Bhikkhus who have gained results from training by using these strong and tough methods, truly make gains which are clearly visible and apparent to the heart. Usually this is because the *citta* which needs to be trained in this way is characteristically bold and likes to put everything into whatever it does without vacillating. When fighting he fights truly; when dying he dies truly; but he does not give up.

Thus, when he goes to train himself to overcome his fear, he looks for a place where he can do so truly, like where he can take tigers for teachers to help him in his training. The more frightening he understands a place to be, the more he sets himself to go there and train himself in the manner of a "life and death struggle".

At such a time he is even prepared to die and asks only to see the disappearance of fear brought about by the superior power of mindfulness and wisdom which are the basis of the training. He submits himself entirely, otherwise he would never be able to train his heart which is already frightened in a frightening place. But in fact, he is able to withstand it until he sees the awesome power of fear and how it cannot compete with the awesome power of Dhamma, so that it then dissolves right before his eyes. In place of the fear, a bold fearlessness arises quite clearly evident and this gives testimony to the methods of training that he has used, that they are not valueless, but in fact have the greatest value, beyond even what one can imagine.

With some people the heart becomes calm as soon as they hear the tigers roaring in the vicinity. With others, as soon as they hear the feet of the tigers walking in their own natural way, unguarded and unconcerned as to whether anyone is interested in being unafraid, or afraid of them, then straight away

the *citta* concentrates and goes down into a state of calm. There are still others who if they work at their practice in the normal way, their *cittas* will never be able to submit and drop into a state of calm, but as soon as they use the method of going and sitting in meditation in a path or place where tigers normally walk by, then although the tigers may not actually be passing by at that time the *citta* can turn round and go down into *samādhi* by depending on the thought and the fear that the tigers will come looking for them.

There are two methods of practising meditation when fear arises. In the first, one makes the *citta* concentrate and stay with that aspect of Dhamma that one has been in the habit of practising without letting the *citta* go away outside to think and imagine about any animals or tigers at all. One's meditation practice just remains with that aspect of Dhamma, with mindfulness to supervise and control it. Then whether one will live or die, one takes refuge entirely in that aspect of Dhamma which one is using as the initial entry into the meditation *(parikamma).* As soon as the *citta* gives way, goes down as one hopes and truly takes refuge in Dhamma without grasping at this or that, it is bound to become calm, and once the *citta* drops into a state of calm the fear vanishes immediately. This is the method of practice of someone who is in the beginning stages of meditation practice.

The second method is used by those whose *cittas* are able to attain *samādhi* and have some basis[26] of heart. When fear arises they will most likely investigate the situation using the way of wisdom. In other words, they analyse and examine the fear and they analyse and examine the whole of the tiger part by part, which the *citta* assumes to be such a frightening object. Thus they consider the teeth, the claws, skin, head, tail and the middle of the body, going through every part, bringing it up and looking at it to find out in what way it is frightening, until their nature is seen quite clearly with wisdom and the fear disappears by itself. This is the method for those who have been used to practising the development of insight *(vipassanā)* and they will probably be able to cure the fear by the use of this method.

26. See footnote 3 on page 3.

3

The White-robed Upāsaka

The foregoing methods have been used by those Bhikkhus who go to live in the forest, to train themselves, and they have gained satisfying results from them, and the tigers have never harmed any of them.

Here, it is appropriate to relate a story so that the reader may think about what happened in this incident. There was an *Ācariya* who was a senior follower of Venerable Ajaan Mun, and at this time he was practising the way of *Dhutanga* while wandering along the bank of the Mekong River on the Laotian side and with him was an *Upāsaka* — a white-robed lay follower. This *Ācariya* was temporarily staying under an overhanging cliff and the *Upāsaka* who maintained the eight moral precepts was staying under another such cliff about 120 meters away. This *Ācariya* who told the story, said that he had stayed there for several months for he reckoned that it was good for the health of both his body and heart, and the practice of the "Dhamma of a recluse" *(Samaṇa–Dhamma)* developed smoothly without any obstacles, both for him and for the *Upāsaka*. The obtaining of food on the alms round *(piṇḍapāta)* was not difficult for they were no more than four kilometres from the nearest village where there were about fifteen houses and the villagers did not come out and bother them, making difficulties and wasting a lot of time when they could be developing the practice of Dhamma, for each of them went about their own business accordingly.

One day in the afternoon the *Ācariya* felt a bit unwell as if he had a slight fever, now hot now cold and the body feeling not quite normal. When the *Upāsaka* came to where he was staying he told him to go and boil some water to mix with some medicine that he thought he would try, thinking that it may effect a cure. A doctor had told him that this medicine could cure malaria and he was afraid that this was the beginning of a bout of malaria. For there was a lot of it about in that district and many people suffered from it as the forest was very thick and people accustomed to living in open country and farmland

were not able to go and stay there. It was also teeming with all sorts of wild animals, tigers and other members of the cat family, and at night their cries and roars were very noisy. It seems that there were also some man-eating tigers in the district which was said to be due to the Vietnamese who make them ferocious and not afraid of people.

As soon as the *Upāsaka* understood what was required he took the kettle to the place where he was staying, to boil the water. After that the *Ācariya* did not see him again and he did not bring the hot water back to him. The *Ācariya* waited until it got dark, but still he did not come, so he thought that the *Upāsaka* may have forgotten about it because he was sitting in meditation and becoming absorbed in the practice and neglecting his duties. Meanwhile the symptoms of the *Ācariya's* fever became steadily milder until it went away altogether.

As for the *Upāsaka,* after getting the kettle he prepared things to make a fire, but however he tried to light it, the fire would not catch, until he started to get angry. Then, forgetting that he was an *Upāsaka* and a follower of an important *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu,* he stood up suddenly and thought with anger:

> "I have made a fire here many times, but why won't it catch this time? Maybe it needs some water. If it needs water I will give it some!"

Thereupon he urinated all over the place where he set the fire until it was all wet and then walked away without saying anything to the *Ācariya* who waited for some hot water until it was night time. Once the night had fully set in some very strange and unusual things occurred.

Previously, while he had been staying there, nothing much unusual had occurred. But this night about 9 pm, the white-robed *Upāsaka* was sitting in meditation and contemplating the misdeeds that he had done and his careless attitude towards the *Ācariya* which was due to his anger which made him stand and urinate over the firewood. In addition he never went to ask the *Ācariya* for forgiveness so as to rectify his fault and negate his bad *kamma.* While he was sitting and reflecting on his faults in a restless anxious manner, there was suddenly a great loud noise from about two yards behind him, the roar of a huge tiger which was crouching and looking at him as if it was just about to leap on him and eat him up. It was also continuously growling softly — enough to test how much courage there was in the anger of a *kammaṭṭhāna* disciple — and loud enough so the *Ācariya* could also hear it where he was staying.

While it was growling it also smacked its tail up and down, hitting the ground with a thudding noise and shifting about back and forward as if it was getting ready to spring on the *Upāsaka* and make fresh food of him right there and then.

As soon as the *Upāsaka* heard this unusual sound which he had never heard so close to him before he became frightened for the first time since he came there several months previously and he quickly turned round to see what it was. It was about the time of the full moon and he could see this huge tiger crouching there, looking at him, quite distinctly. His blood turned to water, he shook with fear and almost went unconscious. He could think of nothing and his heart turned for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and *Sangha* as a matter of life and death. He pleaded:

> "May the Buddha, Dhamma and *Sangha* protect me and guard me and not let this tiger eat me up tonight for then I would not be able to ask forgiveness for my misdeeds, from Venerable *Ācariya* — which I did wrong to him this afternoon. May the Buddha help and protect me for the whole of this night and may the Dhamma and Venerable *Ācariya* have *"mettā"* and make my *"kamma"* void for those things which I did wrong. Don't let it come to the point where I must be eaten by this tiger in punishment for these offences."

Thus he pleaded, he begged, he repeated "BUDDHO", he quivered, shivered, and he turned around and stared at the tiger, afraid it would leap on him and eat him up immediately. But the tiger, as soon as it saw a man turn round and stare at it, drew back a little while still growling the whole time. Then in a short time it shifted its position and came in from a new direction and then drew back again, going back and forward all the time in this way.

Meanwhile the *Upāsaka* felt like death, being forced to turn this way and that, nervously following the restless movements of the tiger going back and forth all round his mosquito net without let up. When he took an attitude of staring intently at the tiger it withdrew, and at times it went so far away that it seemed it may be going for good. But as soon as he relaxed a bit and let his attention wander it would come back right up close to him. He could not let "BUDDHO" and his heart separate and he had to go on repeating it until the heart became attached to it and he held on to it all the time as his guarantee of life. But as soon as "BUDDHO" started to slip away a bit the tiger started to

move in closer every time. When he saw that his position had got worse he quickly recollected — "Buddho" and implored the Buddha to save his life. Then once "Buddho" had become close to the heart, the tiger drew back as though it was going away for good.

But the characteristics of people are such that they generally need to be forced to do things, so as soon as the tiger drew away some distance, "Buddho" started to drop away from the heart — thinking that he would not die. Then the tiger began to move in again and prepare itself, as if it were getting ready to jump on him, but it never did anything but to keep on changing the direction from which it approached.

There was no let up in the battle between the tiger and the *Upāsaka* which went on from 9 pm until dawn with neither of them being ready to admit defeat and the tears of the *Upāsaka* flowed the whole time because of his fear of death or at least until there were no more tears left to flow. But as soon as the light of dawn came, the tiger slowly drew back to about eight yards and then slowly walked away until it went out of sight.

Although the tiger had gone, the *Upāsaka* stayed for a long time under his mosquito net watchful and alert, not daring to go out for fear that it was hiding close by. He was afraid that as soon as he relaxed and came out from his mosquito net it would jump on him and eat him up. So he felt compelled to sit and wait and watch the situation from under his mosquito net for a long time until he saw that all was quiet, that it had gone and was not returning. Then he quickly left his net and ran to where the *Ācariya* was staying, confused, quivering, wild eyed and babbling incoherently so that what he said made no sense.

Seeing the *Upāsaka's* unusual behaviour, the *Ācariya* questioned him and managed to find out that he was asking to be pardoned for the offences which he did against the *Ācariya* the previous afternoon. He explained the reasons for his wrong actions and told him everything including the coming of the tiger and the way it stayed around all night.

But the *Ācariya,* instead of pardoning him at once, turned and spoke in a menacing manner, thereby increasing his concern, saying:

> "What you like you get. If you like what is good you get what is good. If you like what is bad you get what is bad. But in this case you like tigers so you got a tiger. So what's the use of asking me for a pardon, I cannot pardon you yet. At least you should meet those good things that you like for one

more night. If then, you don't die from being eaten by the tiger you will at least have learnt a long lasting lesson which you can reflect upon. The tiger is better than the *Ācariya,* so I shall let the tiger teach and train you. What do you think about that, shall I hand you over to the tiger tonight? If you don't listen to its teaching I shall let it take you away for food once and for all, for I'm tired of teaching you. What do you say, is that what you want? Meeting the tiger and listening to its teaching all last night was quite appropriate to the circumstances, and tonight I will have it come and teach you again. If after that you are still obstinate I will let it take you and turn you into sustenance for its wanderings. Its belly would be well filled for several days. Well, what's it going to be? Say quickly and don't dawdle! Who is the better, the *Ācariya* or the tiger? Answer now, don't hesitate or in a moment I shall call the tiger to take you away and make use of you, which it will do in a far more effective way than this *Ācariya*."

After saying this he acted as if he were calling the tiger, saying:

"Where has that tiger gone to now? Come back quickly and take him away now, don't wait about. I'll turn him over to you to be your follower, so come quickly and take him away."

At this point the *Upāsaka* cried out loudly and wept, completely losing his composure and implored the *Ācariya,* saying:

"I am very afraid and I implore Venerable *Ācariya* not to call the tiger here or I will die right now. Last night I thought I was about to die at one time, but I recovered and came around enough to retain consciousness, so I have come quickly to Venerable *Ācariya* for help. But you keep calling it back again, and where would I get enough spirit to stand up to it. So Venerable Sir, I implore you to tell it to go away and not come back again."

After weeping and imploring Venerable *Ācariya* not to call the tiger again; after prostrating and pleading for his life, conceding his fault in what he did and saying that he would be more self-controlled and careful in the future; after promising that he would never do such an act again while the dread of the lesson he had learnt was still before him; and after coming to implore the *Ācariya* to forgive him; the *Ācariya* seeing that the situation was right granted

him forgiveness and taught him and spoke to him mildly and soothingly, saying:

> "It was nothing but your own evil *kamma* which brought that tiger to you. If you still don't accept the blame for your evil deed, you will see it more clearly tonight! For as soon as night falls that tiger will come and take you away and it won't come back again. It won't speak nicely and act playfully as it did last night."
>
> "When you have been hurt you remember it, for good and evil are always there in the world and nobody can get rid of these two aspects of nature. *If it were possible for kamma to have been put under the power of any being or principle anywhere, such an authority would be sure to have eliminated both of those aspects of nature long ago so that there would be none left to come down to us now. But the fact is that good and evil kamma are still here and this is because kamma does not depend on any special being or power, but only upon each individual who makes his own kamma."*
>
> "In this instance you made evil *kamma* yesterday afternoon and you must see your own evil *kamma.* But if you are still not ready to see your fault, it is quite certain that tonight the striped and tawny lord of *kamma* will come to take you away for you to see the results of *kamma* quite clearly for yourself."

Having admonished him the *Ācariya* told the *Upāsaka* to return to the place where he was staying, but he did not want to go, for fear that the tiger was hiding in wait for him and would jump on him and maul him and take him away and eat him. So the *Ācariya* had to coerce him by making him frightened once again.

> "Just now you said that you accepted and saw the evil of your obstinacy and that you would not do this again. But you have hardly finished saying this and you are being obstinate once again. Why is this? If that's the case you can go on being obstinate if you can really stand up to that tiger."

Then the *Ācariya* called out to the tiger once again to come, saying:

> "Tiger! You who are the *Ācariya* of this *Upāsaka,* where are you? Come here quickly to take away this obstinate *Upāsaka* and teach him a bit will you. I'm tired of teaching him. Hurry! Come quickly!"

As soon as he had finished speaking, the *Upāsaka* began to weep again and promised saying: "I will go back right away now but please don't let the tiger come at all, I am very afraid of it and last night I almost died." Then he hurried back to where he stayed without thinking any more about being afraid or about death.

It is very strange and wonderful how from that day on there was no sign of that tiger prowling about in the district, right up to the time when they moved away from there, which was several months later. In the normal way of thinking it would seem that there must have been something which influenced that tiger to come out and torment the *Upāsaka* who was bold, stupid and evil enough to act in wrong and improper ways, such as standing and urinating all over firewood. Even an ordinary person who is not interested in practising the ways of moral behaviour and Dhamma would not normally do such a thing.

For such a person there is not much that can keep him under control — except for a large tiger which is his equal and can torment and train him. From then on, the *Upāsaka* was completely subdued and the *Ācariya* said that afterwards he never displayed any obstinacy. It was very effective, for tigers are very able to torment and teach people and to instil a fear into them which lasts a long time.

HERE, I SHOULD LIKE TO DIGRESS A BIT, TO INSERT A PERSONAL COMMENT. For, I would like to get a tiger to come and live in the vicinity of Baan Taad Forest Monastery to help me by taking over some of my responsibility when the Bhikkhus, *Sāmaṇeras, Theras,* Nuns or any others become lazy in their practice and spend their time sleeping. It would help to rouse some effort in them, for even if they didn't actually see it, but it only helped by the sound of its roar, it would probably be enough to open their eyes and ears and make them get up and do some practice so that they did not indulge in sleeping too much.

On the other hand, if a tiger came to stay here many of the village dogs who live around the monastery would be so scared they would all run away, which would be a loss of help as they also have been *"Ācariyas",* teaching people who are too lazy to close doors and to look after and put away items of food and edible things. The ideal situation would be to retain both of these *"Ācariyas",* the tiger and the dogs, to help both in stirring up effort and in putting away

and looking after various things. This monastery would then be complete, having both people diligently doing meditation practice and diligently looking after things.

If this were the case it would be very good. But I am afraid that the Bhikkhus, *Sāmaṇeras, Theras,* Nuns and all other followers who come from various places, who are scared of tigers and lazy and careless about looking after things would cause trouble and get angry with the *Ācariya,* complaining: "Why get a tiger to torment us? This is quite unnecessary and is just a big nuisance." But truly speaking there ought to be something standing by to help act as a reminder to people because the *Ācariya* alone cannot keep up with all of them.

Generally it is in the "kitchen" area,[27] where the women visitors and *upāsikās* who come from many places to stay, that they lose out to the dogs from the village which come quietly and hide in the monastery in large numbers all the time, to steal edible things which they then take away and eat.

Although this is not very important, nor something to get upset about, it is nevertheless a shortcoming which is undesirable. For wherever we say that there is a shortcoming in anything it means that the whole is deficient. Especially when this applies to people, and when they are not even interested in correcting themselves it is much worse.

I hope the reader will forgive this diversion but as it has a relationship with the foregoing account it was put in here. But now we will return to the story of the *Ācariya* and *Upāsaka,* which is still not finished.

Afterwards, the Upāsaka was very watchful for fear of the tiger all the time, day and night, for he saw in his mind an image of that large tiger quite vividly and he thought about it coming and searching for him every time he breathed in and out until evening came. He could not relax and take it easy, being obsessed with the idea that the tiger would jump on him, tear him apart and eat him up. But this had a good side to it, for whenever he recalled and saw an image of the tiger, he immediately recalled "Buddho" and there was no time for his mind to slip away. That night, as soon as it began to get dark he started doing his meditation practice, sitting and recollecting "Buddho" part of the time, and part of the time thinking that the tiger would come, thus

27. This is a part of the monastery, about four acres in size, where women visitors stay. It adjoins the rest of the monastery, but is a separate compound.

alternating between the two. He could not sleep and do meditation practice as he had been used to doing it, for while doing the practice his eyes were expecting to see the tiger, so for the whole of that night right through to the light of dawn he had no sleep. Because if he had relaxed and slept, what then would he do if the tiger came? It would be just like waiting for it to come and take him and eat him at its leisure!

As soon as it was dawn he went in a hurry to his *Ācariya,* who asked him: "How was it; did your teacher, the tiger, come and visit you again last night?" He replied that it had not come, and then the *Ācariya* spoke quietly and soothingly to him, saying:

> "What is the use of being afraid of it, if you were afraid of your own evil in the way that you are afraid of this tiger you would have gained freedom from *Dukkha* long ago. You must hurry to get rid of the evil which has accumulated in your heart by reducing it steadily and finally eliminating it. Why be so concerned about the tiger, it will not come and do anything. You can take my word for it that as long as you don't do anything evil again the tiger will not come. You must do your meditation practice to make you feel at ease. Then the tiger will be happy and not anxious about you so there won't be any need for it to come and see you often and lose time in searching for its food. In fact it only came to help you and to drag you up out of hell because of the evil you had done, otherwise you truly would have fallen into hell. So if you don't do any more evil things, the tiger will not come with any intention of eating you. Take good care of yourself, and if you try hard and work diligently at your meditation practice you won't see that tiger again, as you saw it when it came to visit you, until we leave this place."

From that day on, the tiger was never again seen wandering around that district, just as the *Ācariya* had predicted. After that, even though there were still sounds of tigers roaring from time to time, this was normal, the same as would be heard everywhere in the forest and not something that was disturbing. The *Upāsaka* worked hard at his meditation practice and got rid of all his opinionated conceit so that he was transformed into a good person both inwardly and outwardly. From the time that the tiger came to help and train him, even though it was only one night, there was nothing that one could blame in the *Upāsaka.* This was so strange and unusual a thing to happen that it still has not been forgotten. As for the *Ācariya,* he never had any fear at all, and even

when the *Upāsaka* came to tell him all about it he was quite unperturbed. He said that the tiger which came was in fact a creation of the *Devas.*

This *Ācariya* was a senior follower of Venerable Ajaan Mun and he liked to live on his own, deep in the forests and hills, depending for his food on going *piṇḍapāta* to the local farmers. During the time that he spent living under a cliff with the *Upāsaka* he was able to progress in the development of his *citta* far more than in other places, so he stayed there for many months — until it was near the beginning of the rainy season when he returned to the Thai side of the river.

He said that while the tiger was growling softly at the *Upāsaka,* he heard it quite clearly but he took no notice of it because they could be heard all the time so that it was normal and he was used to it. But when the *Upāsaka* came and told him about it, weeping and wailing because he was afraid, the *Ācariya* thought about it and examined what had occurred. A *Devatā* also came and told him about it, so he knew that the *Devatā* had made that tiger to discipline the *Upāsaka* and cure his overweening conceit. Otherwise he would have become used to it and would have displayed his obstinacy all the time, doing evil things more and more so that when he died he would fall to hell. Therefore it was necessary to cure this state in such a way that he would never dare to act in this manner again. The *Ācariya* said:

> "What the *Devatā* said was true because from that day on the *Upāsaka's* character and behaviour changed entirely and he became a different person. Previously he had been quite obstinate and at times he had the characteristics of someone who was a bit mad, but I never objected and I let him go on in his own way. It was not until the tiger came and straightened him out and broke his obstinacy by its rough and forceful ways that I saw clearly how this *Upāsaka* had some very bad characteristics indeed and he was not at all mad. If he had been a bit mad, even the tiger coming to teach him would have been of little value and the madness would probably have come back again. But with this *Upāsaka,* since that day none of his evil characteristics has returned and he is always good and right minded."

This *Ācariya* has a very high standing in Dhamma and he is worthy of worship and devotion, but he died five or six years ago. When he was close to the time of leaving the five *khandhas* he said that he did not want anyone to be disturbed and bothered about him for it would cause needless distraction and worry to them. He wanted to die quietly in the way of the *Kammaṭṭhāna* tradition,

which means that his death is fully in accordance with that of a Bhikkhu who practises the way and is not broadcast with a lot of fuss. When they cremated him, none of the senior Bhikkhus in the country knew about it for it would just be a nuisance and cause a lot of disturbance.

> "Concern about dead people, who are worthless, their assets having all dried up, is not likely to be of much use when compared with concern for the living."

He spoke simply in this way and nobody dared to go against his words. For those were his parting instructions to them which came from a "true heart", and they were afraid that it would be bad and evil to go against what he had said.

While he was still alive I once went to stay with him far away in the hills, for about a fortnight. The place where he was staying was hill forest and he depended on the local farmers for getting food on *piṇḍapāta,* which was enough to live on day by day, and he was said to have stayed in that place for many years *(vassa).* While staying there I timed how long it took to go on *piṇḍapāta,* going out and back. From the place where he was staying to the edge of the forest took just three hours twenty minutes and to the village a total of four hours.

His name was Venerable Ajaan Laa and his original home was in Vientiane, Laos. From the time of his ordination until he died he lived most of the time on the Thai side of the Mekong River, because most of his Dhamma friends and the *Ācariyas* who practised the way were in Thailand.

In his practice of the *"Samaṇa Dhamma"* he was very courageous and resolute and liked to live and go about on his own, or at most he would have only one *Upāsaka* with him. He had the faculty of knowing many strange things including those beings who had *Deva* bodies such as the *Devatās* who worshipped him. He said that wherever he stayed such beings nearly always went there and protected him all the time. His nature was to want little, to be fully content all the time and to dislike going into society, even amongst his friends and other Bhikkhus. He always liked to live in the forests and hills with the local farmers, and the forest and hill people. His level of Dhamma was very high and worthy of praise and worship. In the direction of *samādhi* and *paññā* he was very skilful and proficient, but most people, including Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras,* did not realise this because he never made any show or display of it. It was only those who had lived close to him who knew well about it.

It was about 2493 BE (1950 CE) that I went to stay with this *Ācariya* and I had the opportunity of learning from him and asking questions. I found that his Dhamma was very deep, penetrating and absorbing. He could explain the "production of causes" *(Paccayākāra),*[28] which is *avijjā,* well and in a very profound way. It would be difficult to find anyone who could explain it so well, because the *Paccayākāra* is a very subtle and profound Dhamma and it can only be explained properly and in depth by someone who is well experienced and adept in the practice of *citta bhāvanā.* For the *Paccayākāra,* or *avijjā,* are very subtle *kilesas* and he must be endowed with an equally subtle degree of insight-wisdom *(paññā–vipassanā)* to be able to find out about and to eradicate the basis of *Paccayākāra* which is the true nature of *avijjā;* and also to be able to explain it correctly. This *Ācariya* was one of those who were able to explain the *Avijjā–paccayākāra* with great subtlety, but it is beyond the ability of the writer to explain it here, so we must regretfully pass on to other things.

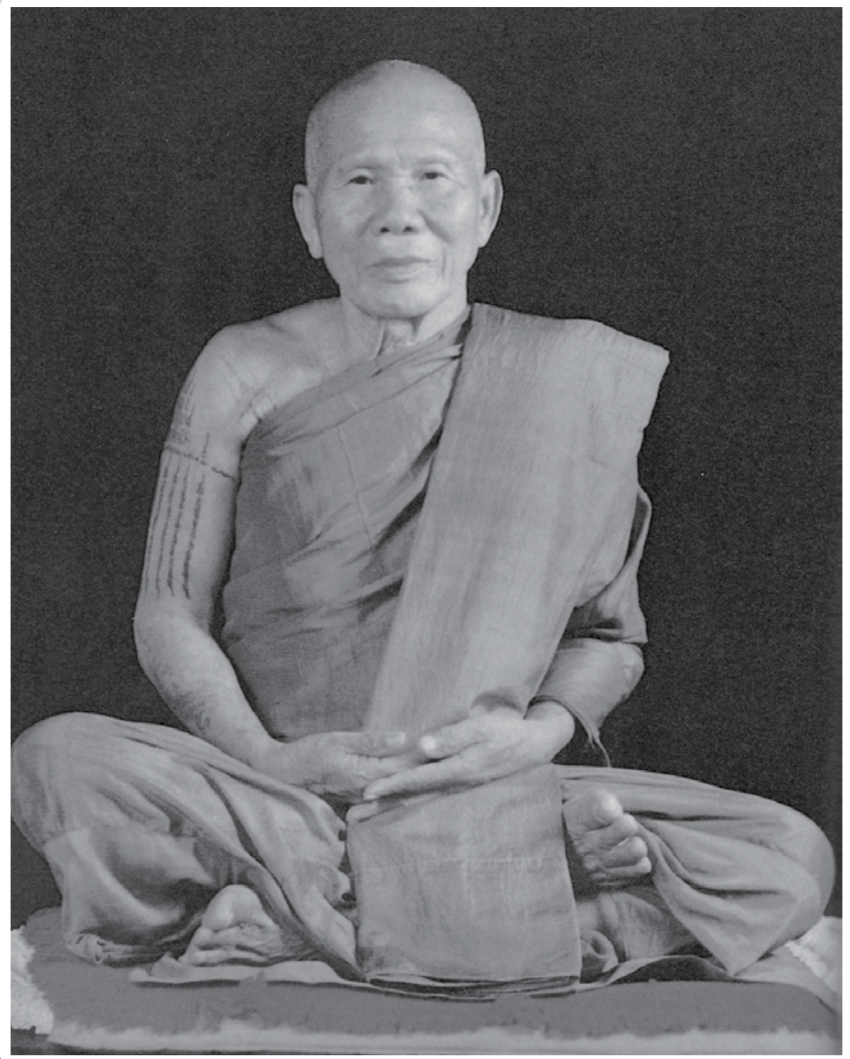
While this *Ācariya* was staying with Venerable Ajaan Mun and Venerable Ajaan Sao, he learnt the practices of eating only once a day and wandering in the traditional way of *kammaṭṭhāna* in the forests and hills. He went on doing this from the day of his ordination until he died, and he never slackened in the practice of his religious observances and duties, nor in his work by way of the heart.

This was an *Ācariya* who was so unfailingly resolute in his practice of Dhamma that it is hard to find anyone like him in this present age and he should be taken as an example by all those who are interested in doing the practice of Dhamma. This ends the story about this *Ācariya.*

Before writing about the above *Ācariya* we were discussing the methods of training and discipline of the hearts of *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* with frightening things, such as tigers. As this was not completed we shall return to this subject.



28. *Paccayākāra* is the same as *Paṭiccasamuppāda.*



Venerable Ajaan Laa



Venerable Ajaan Lui

4

More About Training & Venerable Ajaan Mun's Talk

Some Bhikkhus go and sit in meditation practice on the edge of a deep chasm, which is enough to make them concerned in case they should fall. But these Bhikkhus are not afraid and have to do this as their method of training. If such a Bhikkhu should forget himself so that he loses mindfulness, he accepts the fact that he may fall into the gorge and die, but he does this because when he does his meditation practice in the normal way he cannot control his *citta* and make it remain still. It likes to become involved with things here and there and to be agitated by them, creating a lot of *Dukkha* for himself without letting up for a moment.

Both people and animals are afraid of death in the same way, so when they are put into a truly tight situation, such as going and sitting on the edge of a deep chasm, the *citta* has got to work and it does not need anything else to force it, for death is what the *citta* always instinctively fears most. At such a time, the *citta* fights against death with determination and it calls up mindfulness to be present the whole time, not allowing the *citta* to go elsewhere. He has mindfulness to help and support him at every moment and when the *citta* is well protected with mindfulness, it does not slip quietly away to other things which are appealing to the emotions and which have been its enemies in the past. Then before long the *citta* will be able to drop into concentration and calm. Those Bhikkhus who have used this method have attained results which are satisfying to the heart, in the same way as with those other methods.

Methods in which something is used as a goad, to arouse the fear of death, are very important and valuable. Therefore the work of looking after one's life by having mindfulness present and aware of oneself, causes results in the direction of Dhamma to arise in one's heart. In other words, one comes to

see clearly how the restless, boisterous *citta* calms down and tends toward *samādhi,* and one does not have to wait a long time for this.

Some Bhikkhus go and sit and do their meditation practice in a cave. When they hear the roar of a tiger they notice that the *citta* does not feel in the least afraid, nor does it give way and go into *samādhi* as they want it to. Therefore they must look for a method of intimidating the *citta,* such as going out and sitting in front of the cave so that when the tiger comes there the *citta* will be afraid and quickly concentrate, calm down and look for a safe place free from fear where the tiger cannot touch it. So the *citta* then becomes calm and goes down into *samādhi.*

Generally speaking, those *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who have gained strength of heart at such a time as the *citta* is afraid and go on training themselves until the *citta* has dropped into a state of calm, feel quite sure that nothing that is dangerous can do them any harm at that time. But whatever the truth of this may be, they are not concerned, for they only think of it as being for the important task of gaining strength of heart then and in the future also. Even if they were to die at that time, they are ready to accept it and make the sacrifice, because their faith in Dhamma is greater than their fear of death.

This is why those who are truly intent on the essential meaning of Dhamma like to search for places and methods to train themselves in various ways without letting up. Because they have consistently seen results by direct experience from such places and methods. It is like making a small investment and getting a large profit from it which causes one much pleasure and should induce one to go on doing the same thing continually, without becoming either lazy or bored; as well as undercutting any uncertainty and doubt that may remain, about doing such things, as to whether they bring results or not. Because at every stage of the work, these practices give rise to the most obvious results which are self-evident.

One can sit in meditation practice in front of a cave, wander in the hills and sit in practice on rocky outcrops, wander in the manner of *kammaṭṭhāna* at night so as to meet a tiger, sit in practice in a place where tigers frequently pass by, or walk *caṅkama* and sit in practice competing with the roars of tigers round about, but all of these have just the purpose of helping the *citta* to concentrate and go down into a state of calm much faster than it would normally do so. Or, to arouse wisdom in contemplation of the nature of wild animals as aspects of Dhamma, for the purpose of getting free from one's *"upādāna"*

— attachment — to life and death and steadily getting rid of the longing — yearning for all sorts of things which are related to the *citta*. That's the way! But not in any way for the destruction of oneself.

Those who aspire to get free from all aspects of *dukkha* based on birth and death, generally think and act in the above ways. Even the Lord Buddha, the foremost in the "Three Worlds" used the methods of abandoning his life by fasting, when he ate nothing for forty nine days, which is similar to the foregoing methods. For it is a method which needs strength and resolution in order to defeat the enemy within. But when the Lord saw that it was the wrong way he stopped. Then he turned and made an unshakeable resolve that he would sit and develop the *ānāpānasati kammaṭṭhāna*[29] until he knew Dhamma (Enlightenment), which was his original purpose. He further resolved that if he did not come to know Dhamma in a way that would satisfy his purpose, then he would sacrifice his life in sitting and doing this meditation practice until he died, without moving from that place. This indicates that if he had not truly known Dhamma while sitting in that place developing *ānāpānasati* under the shade of the great Bodhi tree, it would have been the last move of the Lord's life, for even while he was unsure of the way, there was no other way for him to go.

When one thinks about those who are the best and highest examples to the world whether it be the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* through to the teachers *(Ācariyas)* or those ordinary people everywhere who practise Dhamma, they do things, whatever these things may be which are remarkable and which are very different from the usual ways of people, and they make an undying impression.

Thus, the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* work and strive and train themselves in various ways according to what suits each one's nature and ability. They do not do it for excitement, nor for what is bordering on the conceit that they are more skilled, brave or able than their teacher — or anybody else. Because they have the pure intention of seeking the essential meaning and Dhamma to lead them on to freedom from *dukkha* by using these methods. This is how they work and struggle according to their strength and ability which is not even equal to the dust off the feet of the Lord Buddha when he concentrated his effort by his readiness to sacrifice his life. When it comes to this, how could they think that their efforts were superior to the teacher's and how could they

29. Keeping one's attention on the breath going in and out, as a suitable object to attach the mind to, so that it will calm down.

do the practice for the purpose of being able to show off to the world when their efforts are not worth the dust from the feet of the Lord Buddha?

If we think of the way of practice of the Lord Buddha and how he did things and compare it with ourselves who are always falling and failing and making only a little effort and afraid that we may go beyond the teacher — the Lord Buddha. This is shameful and the most disgraceful attitude.

I also am very clever at being afraid in this way, whereas in other ways which are bad I am not clever and not afraid. This is the way of ordinary people who go head first into those things which the wise warn us about, things which we should not want to go into. But those things which they advise us to do and to go into head first we avoid and are afraid of diving into. When I think about it I become angry with myself for being so clever at going in for the wrong things. The readers should not think that I am a good example or many of them may become people who go in for the wrong things also.

Those *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* who looked for various ways of training themselves as already described, did these things from the beginning when they first received the teaching from Venerable Ajaan Mun when he was still young, and they continued to practise what he taught right up to the present. They did not slacken and give up for they saw it as an inheritance which he had bestowed on them with *"mettā"* and taught them in a heart felt way. So each of them tried to hold to the teaching with reverence and the faith that:

> "This is the practice which he has done himself from which he has gained results that have become his heart's refuge. This is also the best which he has selected from his own experience which was resolute, full of punch and vitality, which he has chosen to show for those who are resolute in Dhamma to take hold of as a method for continually teaching, training and disciplining themselves in the future."

Venerable Ajaan Mun's disciples say that when he was young he practised with great determination and his teaching was very vigorous and full of punch, and he also had the faculty of knowing other people's *cittas (paracittavijjā).* Even when he was almost seventy two years old, which was when I went to train under him, his teaching was still full of punch. In fact, when I first went to Venerable Ajaan and heard his teaching, I was almost unable to pay attention

because I was so afraid. But at the same time I had great reverence and faith in him and had to submit to the truths that he showed me in everything that he said, each time, for it was impossible to deny them. When Venerable Ajaan gave a Dhamma talk about the methods of using discipline to train the heart it was much more frightening, both in the sound of his voice which was loud and rhetoric, and also in the way in which he pointed with his finger while saying:

> "Over there, are the forests! Over there, are the hills! They are the right places for a *citta* which writhes and turns about and is difficult to train. Don't get involved in things, in friends or others in this monastery or elsewhere. One who practises the way must know his own character and he must know the way to train himself. If he does not know his own character, even if he went on working at his practice until he died he still would not get the results which he should. When his heart is obstinate he must be resolute in making effort and heavy handed with discipline. Whoever is afraid of tigers should go and stay in the forests and hills with them. Whoever is afraid of ghosts should go and stay in the cremation ground with various types of dead ghosts until the heart has become one with the ghosts! Then one will be able to say that the *citta* has submitted to the discipline."
>
> "If someone, who goes to stay in the forest is not yet unafraid in the face of the tigers, he must not give way and leave the forest; and if those who are afraid of ghosts have not lost their fear of them, they should not leave the cremation ground. They must consider the forests and hills as being places of death for those who are afraid of tigers, and the graveyard as being the place of death for those who are afraid of ghosts. But until they have got rid of fear in whatever it is they are afraid of, they must not leave so that the fear could laugh and make a mockery of them, for this would make them ashamed of themselves for the rest of their lives without having any way to right themselves."
>
> "If one has respect for oneself and for the religion *(Sāsana)* in a true-hearted way, one must not let all sorts of fears arise and lie there where they can excrete their filth down over the heart. One must quickly grab them and pull them down and trample on them and destroy them by work and effort which is replete with patient endurance."

"One who is afraid of death will be accompanied by death through various future lives without seeing an end of it; and one who is afraid of tigers will always have images of tigers coming to deceive him and frighten him. It is similar with one who is afraid of ghosts, for he will have images of ghosts of various kinds coming to deceive him wherever he goes, until he cannot live, eat, lie down or sleep in peace. Even if he happens to see a leaf fall from a tree, his thoughts would deceive him into thinking that it was a ghost coming to haunt him, and this does happen. One is a false person and one's timidity and fear spoil oneself. Wherever one goes or stays one is bound to be timid and mistrustful due to the fear which the *citta* thinks up and imagines to deceive itself. Then one cannot find anything that is genuine and true at all."

"However frightened the heart may be, a person must learn to face up to fear by the methods of testing and disciplining himself until he gets to know the truth about fear. If he is afraid of tigers he must learn and get to know this fear of tigers by experience, by means of mindfulness and wisdom supported by patient endurance; until a bold fearlessness arises and he can jump up and go looking for the tiger, while the tiger is not bold enough to do anything about it!"

"If he is afraid of ghosts he must learn and get to know about his own fear and about ghosts and what in fact ghosts really are. In truth the ghost is nothing but his own heart which haunts him with his own thoughts which make him afraid. Ghosts live with ghosts, people live with people and they do not interfere with each other. If he examines this thoroughly he should just live in peace. But he must not restlessly agitate his heart — for what do you think — would it be happiness? Why then do those who practise the way not know that the *citta* deceives them, and if they don't know this, how can they get to know the true meaning of Dhamma?"

"I have been practising the way for a long time, for forty or fifty years or more. Fear, I have been afraid; Boldness, I have been bold; Love, I have loved; Hate, I have hated; Detestation, I have detested; Anger, I have been angry — all this because I have a heart, I am not a dead man, or monk. But I have tried with my utmost ability to train myself without ever slipping back or giving way. Those things which used to be in charge and overpowering crumbled away under the power of the work and diligence of the one who is not afraid to die. Nothing can get into my heart and hide there secretly

and unnoticed, and wherever I stay I live easy without any worry. Nothing comes now in the way it used to, to stir up and cause the fallacies of fear, boldness, love, hate, detestation and anger to arise, which are all involved in the mass of fire of the *kilesas* which burn the heart."

"What else could bring this result about but the training and discipline of the heart to make it live in submission to reason, which is the 'meaning' of 'Dhamma'. All of you who have come here for teaching with the desire of eliminating all *kilesas* of every kind, by what means will you do this if not by training and disciplining yourselves with work and effort as already mentioned. To bring about the ending of all *kilesas,* such as fear for example, there is only this one way in which you must train and discipline your hearts that are at present wantonly playing and arrogantly running after emotionally exciting things *(ārammaṇa)* which they arouse to think about and imagine, to deceive yourselves. The Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* were able to gain freedom from all *'Dukkha',* only by this one way of training and disciplining the heart and there is no other way that is adequate to enable us to escape."

"As for waiting for fear, laziness and feebleness to clear the way for getting free from *Dukkha,* this you should never expect. For in a while you would die, empty and putrescent, a stain on the religion and a bad smell also; and do not entertain doubt for a long time, it wastes a lot of time uselessly. The Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is not a Dhamma that pets you and treats you gently and softly and deceitfully. But if anyone has faith in the reasoning which the Lord has given us and is dedicated to the practice of it in such a way that he is ready to give his life for it without the slightest fear that Dhamma will lead him to loss and ruin, and if he sets himself to get rid of those things which are his enemies and which are obstacles to his heart, such as fear, he will soon reach the "shore of happiness". For training and disciplining himself with this Dhamma is the only way to get free from *Dukkha,* there is no other."

"How should one think about those places where timid Bhikkhus go and stay and complain that they are frightening, even though the local villagers think of them as being normal and they are not afraid? On the other hand there are some places where I went to stay and practise, and all the local villagers were afraid of these places and they did not want to let me go and stay there, for fear that the tigers would take me and eat me. But I was not

concerned about the tigers, nor about the villagers who told me that the tigers were very fierce. My lack of concern was not boasting that I had no fear of tigers, which in the eyes of the world are fearful animals. I was also afraid of them, but I was not afraid of them in a submissive servile way in which a timid Bhikkhu is afraid. On the contrary, my fear was the fear of a warrior that I resolved:

'Here danger is everywhere and it is bound to be an important place for developing myself. Whether I live or die I submit to my *kamma* which is the way of nature. If a tiger has no meat to eat — or thinks that the meat of a Bhikkhu is sweeter or more tasty than its normal food and it wants some, then I submit to it. But I must hold to Dhamma — in other words, to courage and renunciation for the sake of Dhamma — the whole time, without letting go of it until my last breath. This will be appropriate to the status of a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who is searching for Dhamma with genuine faith in merit *(puñña)* and *kamma* and who upholds the honour of the *Sāsana*.'

"Having made this resolve and relinquished everything to Dhamma I then turned to the work of the heart with unwavering effort without giving up. The more I heard the tigers roaring to each other in the immediate vicinity, the more I turned and made intimate contact with Dhamma, going deeply into it as if the heart and Dhamma were unified, together as one. The longer I went on fighting the battle between the tigers, and Dhamma which was the goal I was aiming for, the more I saw the wonder of the heart and Dhamma arise, displacing any thoughts about the tigers coming to eat me which would only have wasted a lot of time. But a timid person is like a young child who has learnt little and takes hold of fire to play with so that he burns himself. When a timid person is unable to find the way out he brings up thoughts of tigers or ghosts and then brings up fear to burn his own heart without knowing how to right the situation — like the child playing with fire."

"Sometimes the practice both internally and externally comes across obstacles one after another. If then one's heart is not truly firm and courageous one is bound to fall down in an incompetent manner. In other words, the heart is troubled and obsessed with its own problems and while they remain unsolved, *dukkha* goes on piling up until they are solved, each of them, one by one. So ease and contentment of heart comes sporadically, and in the body there arises sickness and pain. For the body is the concern

of the heart which is responsible for protecting and restoring it, and the heart must keep a watch on it and judge what is necessary and look after it according to the circumstances. In some places the atmosphere is very heavy making it hard to breathe, which is bound to have an effect on the body and mind. But one has to put up with it and stay there until one can look for more suitable conditions and one may have to endure the discomfort of it for many days."

"At the time when Venerable Ajaan Sao and I first went out far away to practise, people did not know anything about *kammaṭṭhāna*. The bare poverty and lack of everything focused on us two 'warriors'. For the hill people were not interested like they are nowadays, and how a Bhikkhu lived, slept, ate and what requisites he used was of no interest to the hill people. You must not think that I became the *Ācariya* that is here now by means of ease and plenty steadily building up results. In fact we had to struggle and strive and practise with suffering and hardship constantly while almost losing our lives."

"Food! We only had bare rice to eat, see! It was like this much more often than when we had chilli and fish that they normally ate. The villagers had no lack of their normal foods, but they did not understand the manner in which *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* ate. At the most they used to put in one or two bananas as was customary in putting food in the bowl, and once in a while they may include a packet of chilli and salt. Sometimes they would give some chilli pounded up with salted raw fish, but we only found this out after we got back to where we were staying and opened the packet. We had to put it aside because we could not eat it,[30] as there was no lay person available to cook it for us."

"Generally it was like this for *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* at that time everywhere they went. It was only after living in a place for a long time, until we came to know their characteristics and they came to know ours, that they came to ask questions so that we got to know each other better. After that we would leave and go wandering to practise the way in another place where we thought it would be suitable. Then at the new place where we went, the same thing would happen all over again."

"For the place where we rested and slept we had to accept whatever was available by force of necessity, as we had done in various other places already. If it was the dry season it was more comfortable and convenient for we could find dry grasses and leaves to lay down where we slept, enough

30. In the *Vinaya* rules, eating uncooked meats and fish is not allowed for a Bhikkhu.

to make it soft to rest one's head on so one could lie down and sleep from time to time."

"In some villages there were good people who, as soon as they saw a Bhikkhu come and stay in the vicinity of the village would go out and ask them whether everything was all right and what their intentions were, whether they were going to stay or move on and how long they intended to stay. We would then tell them something about what we were doing so that they could get some understanding of it. Then they would get together and make up a shelter where we could live, enough to ward off sun and wind, and a rough platform on which we could rest and sleep at times. Also a place for walking *'caṅkama'* which would be enough to make it convenient for doing the practice."

"Wherever we went, generally if we stayed there long enough the villagers would come and make up a place to live and other things, and they would come to have a true faith in us. When the time came for us to leave they wouldn't want us to go and they would complain that they were going to miss us very much. But we always had to do what was necessary for ourselves, so we had to return constantly to the practice of wandering. Because living all the time in one place is not very good and our work would tend not to develop as it should. Staying for a while and then moving on is a way to rouse oneself and keep oneself constantly alert. I found this to be very good for my own character and my work developed well."

"Going wandering in the manner of *'Dhutanga'* in a variety of places without having any fixed destination nor any signposts to define the place or the time, both of which tie one up, is for myself a way that is unencumbered and full of ease of heart. As for others I cannot say, but if it is done for the sake of not being cluttered up, messy and disorderly, it should come to the same thing. Always moving on, then staying in whatever place one sees to be suitable for practising the way without any concern or worries. Responsible only for oneself; one's body, life and breath being part of oneself and the practice of the way being also a part of oneself. Even the Path, Fruit and *Nibbāna,* which should be within one's reach, depends on the practice which is done by oneself — the one who causes it to arise. Going about and staying here and there, and practising the way for the sake of Dhamma, in the manner which is mentioned above, thus depends on oneself to search for what suits the one who should be able to attain and reach Dhamma which is the goal that it aims for and longs for with every breath."

"When one is quite sure that in making conditions suitable everything depends on oneself, then one must go to whatever place is suitable and do whatever practice or training and discipline are suited to one's own state. Then even if one does not want to go there, one must; if one does not want to stay there, one must; if one does not want to do the practice because one finds it difficult, one must; and if one does not want to do some ascetic discipline when one ought, one still must do it. Even if one does not want to put up with poverty and lack of everything including the four requisites, one must put up with it because one wants to be a good person, one wants to know and see Dhamma and one wants to gain freedom from *Dukkha.* But if one brings the *kilesas* to the fore, letting them lead the way, it will be just like it has always been!"

"A short while ago we talked about fear — such as not wanting to stay in lonely places for fear of tigers. This is the way of the *kilesas* which always hold one back, not wanting to let one go to those places where it is right to go, where one can practise in the traditional manner of the '*Aryans*' who have led the way and destroyed these *kilesas.* But they *(kilesas)* want to lead one to go and stay in those places which are full of people and restless confusion, like those places where people have fun and enjoyment, such as the music halls, the theatre and other places where there is singing, music and entertainment of various kinds. This is the way the *kilesas* lead one on! They can catch the hearts of people and draw them away from morality *(sīla)* and Dhamma so easily, and they can catch the heart of a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* and draw him away from the forest which is the place where he does the practice. Or, they may not let him go into the forest for fear of tigers, ghosts and other things, and then pull him back into the trap — into the sphere of the halls of entertainment just as they like. After which they finish him off completely."

"It should be quite obvious to us that if we let the *kilesas* lead the way, the result will be that they stamp their imprint on the heart in the way I've just described. I have therefore tried to oppose them consistently and never to give way, but to resist those *kilesas* which always lie in wait to tie up our hearts whenever they get a chance. Thus it was that I went to places where people in the world do not want to go and where the *kilesas* do not like to go. I did things which the world does not like doing, nor did the *kilesas,* and I trained and disciplined the heart — the heart that is liked by the world

which cherishes the *kilesas,* not wanting to let it be trained and disciplined all the time by wandering in the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* to all sorts of places. Wandering in accordance with that faculty which sees what is right by way of Dhamma to bring one results of calm and peace of heart; and also to bring one enough cleverness and wisdom to know what is the true basic structure of the main army and the supporting units of the *kilesas,* and exactly where they are located all the time. And furthermore to keep going on in this way until mindfulness and wisdom have become strong enough to be able to keep up with them and to sort and divide them out in such a way that those which are good may remain and those which are evil must be destroyed and no quarter is asked or given. The main thing that helped in this task was the practice of wandering and the places where this was done, which have already been described, and these have an importance which must never be underestimated."

"I always praise and think highly of those who practise the way in the foregoing manner, because this is the straight and direct way to the Path, the Fruition and *Nibbāna* as it always has been and will be. But those who can only think of tigers coming to eat them as food as soon as they enter the forest make me feel weary and sorrowful and tired of teaching them. I don't want to teach them for it is a waste of time and effort, and it is better to conserve my time and energy for teaching those who are genuinely interested and who are earnest and resolute. Then the Dhamma can be of use to the world, which is appropriate to Dhamma as being that aspect of nature which is so valuable."

"When I see anyone coming to me for teaching, whose character is weak and flabby as if his bones were about to fall out of his body even though he is physically strong and well, I feel sorry, like looking at someone who is sick, who appears to be in a serious, critical condition and beyond hope of a cure by medicine. Then the Dhamma in my heart with which for a long time I have used for teaching people — in fact since I first started — all runs away and hides but where it goes to I don't know. All that remains is mere knowing which one cannot make any use of. I think maybe the Dhamma is afraid of the influence of such complete weakness and flabbiness, which is more than it can stand, so it all runs away and disappears. Then I have nothing left which I can bring out and show him and I can only sit unable to think, looking at the heart and unable to say anything. Why should this

happen? If one compares this with a doctor, he would probably have come to the end of his resources to cure such a severe fever, and with such a person as this I also probably come to the end of my resources to cure this disease of weakness and flabbiness which is beyond the possibility of trying to force him and drive him to a cure. So the Dhamma disappears into hiding and I have nothing left which I can say to him."

"All you who have come here for training, have you ever thought how the sickness of being afraid of tigers and ghosts is also the kind of sickness that Dhamma is afraid of? It does not dare to face up to this sickness, so if you want to let Dhamma have a way in which it can stay with you, instead of running away and disappearing into hiding, you should make a complete change of heart into a new state. This change of heart need not be very much, for it is enough merely to see something of the virtues and faults of yourself, who is at present so timid. This can be done by thinking how the Lord Buddha, the *Sāvakas* and all the *Ācariyas* were true warriors. So at least I must fight against that which I am afraid of at the present time. If I should believe that this fear is sacred, such that when I fight it and treat it badly and drive it out of my heart I would die, I must consider why it is that none of those who have trained themselves and ill treated fear, such as this fear that I have in my heart at present, and who have driven it out of their hearts ever seem to have died from it. Why then am I so afraid? And right now won't I reach the stage of being driven mad by this fear? But if I don't know this for myself, nobody else can know it. So how should I act now and practise for the best — or do I resist and go completely mad with this fear from now on?"

"In this, the evidence points quite clearly to the fact that the Lord Buddha, the *Sāvakas* and all the *Ācariyas* — and in particular the one who is now teaching me to clean out my fear did not die from being eaten by tigers; and those who have already attained *Parinibbāna* did not go there because the tigers eat them, but because of: *"Anicca vata sankhārā…"*[31] As for myself, why then should I think that the tigers are the only ones who are waiting to act as undertakers with my corpse — as if the world was full of tigers just waiting to act as undertakers to human cadavers even though I have never seen even one tiger waiting to take the body of someone who has died. I've only ever seen "people" coming in various ways to carry out

31. This is the first line of the verse that is always recited at funerals. *Anicca vata sankhārā* means: "All conditioned things are impermanent." For a full rendering, see footnote 135 on page 462.

the funeral ceremonies, cremations and such things and gathering up the bones and disposing of them suitably."

"After such contemplation I think that the fear will be prepared to leave, complete with its family, relatives and descendants who have long established their roots and dwellings securely in the heart. They will move out and scatter, fearfully shivering in despair, because they have no way to fight against a warrior who has the latest weapons, so they will go until there are none left. After that, nothing will ever again come trespassing, stirring up trouble and causing fear to arise."

"In seizing each type of *kilesa* and removing it from the heart, if one does not have the method of mindfulness and wisdom as tools to aid one in suppressing them, but only anger to act in a threatening menacing way so as to frighten them it is no use at all. One should know that the *kilesas* are not like a stupid dog which runs away in confusion to the pleasure of the person who frightens it, but instead they are the cleverness and sharp wit of that base and vile nature that perches and preys on the heart of a person. The more one threatens them without having the tools of mindfulness and wisdom which truly frighten them, the more it is as if one were just making them laugh a lot and have fun biting into and eating the heart away; until it can no longer be called the heart of a person and it becomes the heart of an animal, a ghost or a demon entirely."

"You must not think that the *kilesas* are afraid of such things as the force of barbarity or ferocity, for such force only comes from the *kilesas* themselves who provide it and they suggest that one should thus intimidate them. So it is good fun for them and they laugh every time one threatens them, because they see that one is stupid to the point that one does not understand that such threats are the *kilesas* themselves and this is just their kind of business."

"If you really want to frighten the *kilesas* and to see them flee away before your own eyes, then you must go ahead and practise those methods which have been taught already. In other words, wherever there is more fear and wherever it is strongest, the more should you go there and stay there and the more should you examine and contemplate it without letting up or slackening your efforts. What if you should die? Then you should accept this and submit yourself to Dhamma absolutely without any regrets or longings at all. If you do this sort of thing the home of the *kilesas* is bound to be ruined and destroyed so that they all have to flee in disorder, confusion

and turmoil, worse than a conflagration of the capital city. If you have never seen a capital city all in flame you should try reforming the *kilesas* using the methods which I have already outlined. Then you will see the *kilesas* running in panic and complete confusion away from the heart, more so than people when their house is on fire."

"I have already done this and seen the results of it quite clearly and nobody can come and tell me lies about it. Therefore I can talk about it with full confidence without being afraid of whether anyone will laugh at it, or agree with it, for the story of it is true as I have told it. The Dhamma which I bring out to teach you, with whatever ability I have, comes almost entirely from this kind of practice and if anyone wants me to teach in some other way which I have never practised and of which I have never seen the results, I cannot do it. For it would be unfamiliar and strange and would be talk just for the sake of talking and it could lead others into trouble, and this I will not do. But teaching of the kind that I have taught here, wherever it goes, I can reach it, because I have the complete confidence in myself that I also have done it in this way and I have truly seen results of this kind arise clearly in my heart."

"Whoever wants to see the *kilesas* falling from the heart and drifting away from it should try to act and practise in the manner which I have taught here. But if anyone wants to see the *kilesas* moving in over the heart with their children, relatives and various supplies for their armies, and setting up their houses and work places, and places to discharge their ordure of various sorts onto the heart, then he must go the way of giving in and surrendering to them. So when any of the *kilesas* stirs and comes out even just a little, he bows in submission and pays homage to it. Such a person will be the owner of becoming and birth — which means, continual birth and death throughout the cycle of the 'round' *(vaṭṭavana).* He has no need to escape for he can't get free from it and go anywhere else even to the end of time, because the way of the *kilesas* and of those who promote the *kilesas* is just that of birth and death."

"This is very different from the way of Dhamma and of those who promote Dhamma in order to cut away the *kilesas* and the cycle of births and deaths from the heart at every turn of their work, and in this work they do not hesitate to press forward and fight them in the manner of those who are not afraid of death. In such a person who is a fighter, even if the heart

has been weak and feeble, it can change and become strong and resolute and it can go on until it changes and becomes a heart that is 'free from the round' *(vivaṭṭa).* Once the heart has become 'free from the round', there is no need to ask about the various kinds of *kilesas* for they will all have disappeared entirely."

"Now which way do you want it to be? Are you going to be a fighter for continuing birth and death, or a fighter for the destruction of becoming and birth by getting rid of all the seeds of it which are buried in all our hearts? You must make up your minds now — don't put it off. You must not think that your breath is very long — like an electric power line — for its length is only as far as the breath going in and out from the lungs to the nose. You must not delude yourselves into thinking it's so long that it will go on forever."

The foregoing is the kind of teaching *(ovāda)* with which Venerable Ajaan Mun taught the practising Bhikkhus from time to time. When he taught for the purpose of stirring them up so as to arouse a determined and cheerful attitude towards the practice of Dhamma the nature of what he taught seemed to be much more intense and pointed than normal. With anyone who had not heard him before, it was quite likely that they would be afraid, to the point of shivering, instead of becoming calm while listening, which is what should happen. For it would appear to them as if he was telling them off and threatening them, whereas in truth it was just his method of presenting Dhamma which was suited to the time, place and the people who were listening and taking in what he taught, and there was no hate or anger concealed in what he taught at all. But with those who had heard him before, the more they heard him urging them on in Dhamma, and however severe and strong he became, the more their hearts became calm and peaceful. It was as if he helped them to chop up the *kilesas* within them so that the *kilesas* were all cleared out of the heart in order that they could see clearly with their eyes and hearts while they were listening. This is the reason why the Bhikkhus who practise the way have always been so interested in listening to the *Ācariya* whom they revere and have faith in, without ever becoming satiated, and it has always been like this right up to the present day.

The revealing of Dhamma in its various parts, on suitable occasions, to those who come for training and teaching is upheld as an important tradition by those who go the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* following in line from Venerable Ajaan Mun, which is successively carried down both by the *Ācariyas* and by those who come all the time to practise the way by depending on the teachers. Because the displaying of Dhamma as it applies to the practice in its various levels from the initial stages of *samādhi* up to the attainment of complete mastery and from the initial stages of wisdom up to the most subtle, is the display of a map or plan of the direct path of the progress of the *citta*s of the *Ācariyas.* They bring out the teaching from their own knowledge and understanding which is genuinely derived from their own practical experience, so that those who have come to them for training may follow in their footsteps and check in what ways their own hearts do not conform to the teaching. When they are not yet sure about anything they may ask so that the teacher can explain, or amplify, or correct any points where their understanding seems to be faulty, for they do not practise the way in the manner of someone who guesses or assumes what is right and wrong, based only on his own thoughts and views.

Generally, those who practise the way learn Dhamma directly from the *Ācariya,* from the initial stages of training in *bhāvanā* right up to the highest levels, by listening and checking frequently with the *Ācariya.* Thus whenever their *bhāvanā* gives rise to knowledge and experience of any sort, they go to tell the *Ācariya* so that he can then explain more about it to increase their mindfulness and wisdom each and every time, and also to correct any faults bit by bit, both in their *samādhi* at each level, and their wisdom in each ground of wisdom.

In the beginning stages of *samādhi,* the foregoing is not so important, although there are some cases in which a person may get strange knowledge of external things. If this happens the *Ācariya* must be available to explain the way to practise with this kind of *samādhi* in order that a person of this kind may go on in the right way.

In general, the way to practise *samādhi* for each individual is to take hold of that basic way which he has been used to practising. Thus, those who have been able to attain calm with any Dhamma object such as *ānāpānasati*[32] for example should take up that Dhamma object and go on practising it steadily without weakening or giving up. If then anything strange or unusual happens as a result of this practice they should go and tell the *Ācariya* about it so that

32. See footnote 8 on page 5 and footnote 29 on page 67.

he can explain it for them to understand and so that they can go on practising steadily without going wrong. But where wisdom is concerned, its nature is such that it needs to be continually checked between the one who practises the way and his *Ācariya* for it is most complex and intricate. But this will be explained later at the right time.

The *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* who follow in line from Venerable Ajaan Mun have great faith and reverence for their *Ācariyas* — beyond that which they have for their own lives, because they learn Dhamma from the heart of the *Ācariya* so that it becomes their own Dhamma. Or, one could call it a transmission from one heart to another, and this would not be wrong, for in fact this is what happens.

When Bhikkhus who practise the way come together to stay with the *Ācariya* in the place where he is living there are bound to be meetings for training as well as discussions and consultations going on all the time. Anyone who has a personal problem can tell the *Ācariya* and get his guidance on this particular problem whenever there is a suitable opportunity. When the *Ācariya* has explained and cleared up the problem so that the Bhikkhu fully understands, he will go and practise accordingly and try to make his knowledge, his understanding and his practical application accord with what the *Ācariya* has recommended. If he has further problems later on he can go again to clear them up when they arise.

Others who are also doing the practice will go along and clear up their problems when they arise, in a similar manner, but they must not hold on to their doubts letting them pile up, for this would delay their progress, or it might even be a danger to them. Because this path is a way along which they have never gone before and it is quite possible for them to make mistakes and go wrong without them realising it.

Those who practise the way all think and understand in this manner, so that if any of them have any questions or problems they will bring them out and ask the *Ācariya* about them, or one of the other Bhikkhus who they think will be able to clear up their problems. For in the circle of those who practise the way they live together as a group, with a genuine concern for and dependence on each other, and not merely living in the same place. For in living together, the associations between each other variously, make for many interrelationships both internally and externally. This is so from the *Ācariya* down, including all those who are going the way of the *"Brahma–faring"*

(Brahmacariyā) together. They have respect and love for one another and when there is anything that they should discuss and talk over they are concerned that the knowledge and understanding shall be clearly conveyed to each other without any underlying opinionatedness or conceit. Because of this, their living together is peaceful and harmonious and it is rare that any trouble arises amongst those who practise the way. In fact, in their harmony and cooperation, in their friendliness towards each other by sharing out things given to the *Sangha (Sanghavatthu),* as well as Dhamma and its meaning in various ways; and in the way that they are ready to submit and give way to each other, it shows how well they can practise the way and how they are worthy of respect. Both the seniors and juniors respect each other in their various ways in accordance with their age in *Vassa*[33] and the level of their standing in Dhamma without any taint of being haughty and puffed up. For they have nothing but respect and a self-effacing humility and these graceful manners between each other are their normal characteristic behaviour and they live together in complete dependence on each other, as if they were all parts of one body.

Behaviour & Practice in a Forest Monastery

The four requisites[34] which accrue to the monastery in varying quantities from time to time are shared out so that they go to every Bhikkhu and *Sāmaṇera* in the monastery. Excepting only when there are too few things to go all round in which case they are given to those who are in the most need. When more of such things are given on a later occasion they are then distributed after considering who has the greater need and who the lesser and then giving to the former first, but also attempting to distribute some to each of them, according to how much of each requisite each one has.

When someone gives things of various kinds, the Elder *(Thera)* who is the head Bhikkhu must call the Bhikkhus to come and arrange the things and distribute them to everyone including the *Sāmaṇeras* with a heart of friendliness *(mettā),* as if they were truly his own children. For his love and compassion for the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* as well as his attitude and conduct towards them is the same as that of parents for their children. Except in so far as he does

33. A rains retreat for three lunar months approximately between July and October. Again, *Vassa* means the number of *Vassa* (1 *Vassa* is approximately equal to 1 year) one has been ordained.

34. Clothing, food, shelter and medicines.

not act in the "ways of the world" as parents do who sometimes tease and play with them, but he accords with the usual ways in which love and compassion take place in the Buddhist religion.

The head Bhikkhu considers that he has an important responsibility and duty which he should never neglect, this being to watch and take note of the behaviour and the characters of the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* who he is looking after, and to advise, teach, admonish and scold them. Although the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* under the *Ācariya* may be very afraid of him, yet they also respect him greatly, love him much and have a lot of faith in him. At the same time, the *Ācariya* also has *mettā* for them and he loves and guards them well.

If any one does anything wrong he must be told so, reproved, taught and well scolded without any fear or favour, because both sides are very close to each other and they look on themselves as being virtually one and the same — a unity, which cannot be separated. Because of this, looking after such a group is easy, because both sides are based on Dhamma.

But if anyone does anything wrong intentionally it is considered by those who practise the way to be a serious matter. For even though the fault may be small it makes the *Ācariya* and the rest of his followers lose confidence in that person, and it is only after he has been sent away from them that they can regain calm and happiness. That the Bhikkhus show such a dislike of one who does wrong things deliberately is in accordance with Dhamma. Because it is the way of people, that when they deliberately do wrong things of little importance it is sure to be only the prelude to wrong doing of great importance in the future. So when they "cut out the tree that has caught fire, while the fire is still small" they are doing the right thing, *(sāmīci–kamma)* which we should agree with.

As was written in Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography, they generally had meetings to listen to and receive training once every seven days in the *Vassa* period. But on other days, those who had any doubts could go and ask Venerable Ajaan about them when there was a suitable opportunity and he was free.

While staying at the *Vihāra,* some of the Bhikkhus would look for a suitable place in the forest, outside the monastery, where they could walk *caṅkama* and sit in *samādhi bhāvanā* as they felt like it, both in the day time and at night. After the end of the *Vassa* period, many of them liked to go out far away from the monastery and find a place where they could hang their umbrella tents and where it was suitable for the work of self-development. But when it was

time for sweeping the paths and clearings in the monastery (each afternoon) and for doing other routine functions of various kinds, including going on the alms round *(piṇḍapāta)* and eating food, they would normally come and join in with the others.

These Bhikkhus did not fix their times for walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā,* for as soon as they were free they just started doing it; and they never had any fixed routine of walking or sitting nor did they determine for how long they would go on working. Some of them sometimes walked from dusk to dawn whereas at other times they may walk from between two to seven hours.

In doing the sitting practice, one who is new to it can sit for about one hour and then gradually increase the time as he gains more skill and ability of heart *(citta)*. But those who have become used to sitting can do so for a long time, and the more the *citta* has the ground of *samādhi,* or wisdom, the longer can they sit. Each time they may sit for between three and eight hours and sometimes all night; but walking *caṅkama* or sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* for three to five hours is considered normal by those who are used to it and do it regularly. There are no aches, pains, tiredness or stiffness, because their walking or sitting is done entirely for the development of the *citta* and their interest is in this task and not in being anxious about various aches and pains in the body. Therefore bodily feeling does not bother them as it would when sitting normally, not doing *bhāvanā*.

For those Bhikkhus in whom the ground of the *citta* is at a high level as far as *samādhi* is concerned, as soon as they have entered into the practice of meditation enough for the *citta* to drop down into a concentrated state, they can rest there undisturbed for many hours before rising out of it. When this happens, feeling *(vedanā)* is not able to disturb them, and as long as the *citta* does not rise up out of this state, feeling does not arise. Therefore, the walking or sitting of someone who has a ground or basis of *citta* is very different from that of someone who still has no ground. Even in the same individual there is a great contrast between his walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi* when his *citta* still has no ground in Dhamma at all, and when his *citta* has such a ground. Thus for example, when one is new to the training, to walk or sit for as much as one hour is very hard, but as soon as the *citta* has a ground in Dhamma, one is not troubled by painful feeling even after walking or sitting for many hours. This shows us quite clearly that what matters most is associated with

the heart rather than the body. And again, when the weather is pleasantly cool, or when a light rain is falling and the body feels comfortable and the *citta* is quite clear, as soon as one starts doing one's meditation practice one finds that the *citta* tends to be different from its usual state both as regards *samādhi* and wisdom. For the *citta* can quickly go down and rest there for a long time before rising out of it, and when the *citta* has completely come out there are no aches or pains in the body at all. Therefore the heart is the important one in the human being.

When these Bhikkhus strove for self-development they did so truly with full commitment to the work of doing this one duty without getting themselves involved in anything else. Their striving therefore went on continuously with causes and results taking place consistently and steadily. The way in which their hearts developed thus became more clear for them to see every time. If this was in *samādhi* they would know clearly that the *citta* was able to go deeply into a very subtle state. If it was in the direction of wisdom *(paññā),* they knew clearly that they had the skilfulness every time that they became involved in any of these "things"[35] *(ārammaṇa)* which are the means of developing investigation *(vicāra).* So the heart gradually emerges and rises out of the "boiling swamp" composed of the various *kilesas* like the sun arising from the ground (the horizon) to spread its light over the world.

These are the results which make all those who practise the way engrossed in their striving so that they forget whether it is day or night, what day month or year it is, and they forget time and how many hours or minutes have passed because they are just not interested enough to think about them. But the things which they pay close attention to all the time are their strivings with mindfulness and wisdom which will bring victory closer to them all the time they go on striving. For they see freedom from *dukkha* becoming more and more apparent in the heart which is being opened up. In other words, the various *kilesas* which cover it up are being removed by mindfulness and wisdom unceasingly. Whether sitting, walking, standing or lying down, all the time it is being opened up, the only exception being while asleep. But as soon as they wake up they start the process of opening up the heart by removing the *kilesas* from it. This is the nature of their work which is truly as important as their own lives.

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35. "Things" refers to the *Paññā Kammaṭṭhānā,* including such things as: *anicca, dukkha, anattā;* the body and the 4 *nāma khandhas;* and the *paccayākāra.*

All those Ācariyas who have done the practice, both those of the past and those who are still living, must have been strong and persistent and they must have experienced a lot of suffering and difficulty due to the training and the ascetic practices, in a similar way, before they were able to become *Ācariyas* teaching other people. Therefore, those who intend and hope to reach Dhamma, in a manner like those *Ācariyas* who have experience and who reveal it for others to hear, should not do the practice of "jumping the queue" and doing as they please in the way that people in the world do things expediently to get results. One ought to know that Dhamma is very different from the world, and if those who practise do not follow the path and pattern of teaching along which the *Ācariyas* lead them, but just do what they think is convenient and easy or quick and, as they say, "jumping the queue" and taking up some modern, up-to-date Dhamma which grows in their hearts, there is no hope for them. *Because Dhamma does not adapt to ancient or modern times, for "Dhamma" is just "Dhamma", and the "World" is just the "World" and they have always been thus and they do not change and adapt. The practice of Dhamma therefore, should go the way of enacting those causes which are appropriate and suitable. The results which they should rightly hope for will then be able to arise.*

But distorting Dhamma to suit their desires or fancies without any thought of looking to see whether it is appropriate or not is the same as the practice of "jumping the queue", and the results which they are anxious to attain will be out of line, like a broken queue, or the wrong way round, and useless. Then they will be sorry and assume that although they did the practice until they almost died they did not get results as they should and it would be better not to do any practice at all. The word, "better", and not doing the practice because of their false understanding, will then become a poison which burns them for a long time, thus becoming a doubly compounded fault. This is nothing but the way to destroy themselves entirely, due to going the easy way and taking short cuts as one likes and doing the practice in the manner of "jumping the queue".

Therefore I ask you please to take note of and to keep in mind that Dhamma is of such a nature that it has definite laws in regard to both its causes and results. If then, one is going to practise Dhamma in the hope of gaining value and the highest blessings *(siri–maṅgala)* from it, one should take good note of the methods of practice, without thinking of acquiring or doing anything which is characterised by an underlying distortion in the sphere of practice.

This includes such things as come from the conceit of being an up to date, modern man who wants to spread his views loudly and wants to be the motive force in a reform, all of which leads in the wrong direction.

Those of the greatest wisdom practised and gained experience to begin with, and then chose what was suitable, rejecting what was unsuitable with penetrating wisdom, before they revealed Dhamma to others in the name of the *"Svākkhāta Dhamma"* (The Rightly Taught Dhamma), which is right and complete and always suitable in all ages. So that in whatever place and age, the Dhamma is entirely acceptable and complete in word and meaning. From this we can understand that the Dhamma is already complete and entire, both in its causal aspect and the ensuing results and it is fit to be followed and practised without any doubt and uncertainty. The results that come from this practice are always a steadily increasing happiness and all one hopes for, from the level of the Dhamma of virtuous behaviour *(Kalyāṇa–Dhamma)* upwards to the levels of *Ariya Dhamma.* Or, if we speak in terms of the class of people who get these results, it includes the virtuous person *(kalyāṇajana)* and the noble person *(ariyajana)* going up through the various levels to the *Arahant (Arahatta–puggala)* and there is nothing lacking on the path of the virtue which arises from the "Middle Way" *(majjhima)* of practice.

> Those who have practised the "Middle Way" in accordance with the principles of Dhamma have always pointed out that it consists of *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā.* In other words, whenever one should have *sīla* (moral behaviour), one should pay attention to *sīla*; whenever one should have *samādhi* — calm of heart — one should pay attention to doing the *samādhi* practice so as to arouse it; and whenever one should have *paññā* (wisdom) one should develop *paññā* so that it arises. But one must neither promote exclusively, nor reject any one of these three and thus spoiling it, for this would be to reject and spoil oneself, because *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā* are Dhamma treasures which are interrelated with each other.

Those who practise the way should pay equal attention to *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā* and whenever it is appropriate to develop any of these Dhammas they should do so. For they are not things which should be rejected or chosen just as one feels inclined, which would be a wrong interpretation of Dhamma. These three factors are not three piles of treasure all having value in the same way, like silver, gold and the finest diamonds, so that one may just choose

this one and reject that one. But because *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā* are Dhamma qualities which are linked to the practice of those who need these Dhamma qualities, they should practise in such a way that they may be brought into action in a harmonious manner as and when there is need for either *sīla,* or *samādhi* or *paññā* respectively. In other words, *"sīla"* is the ground of someone who maintains *sīla* to look after himself all the time, whereas *"samādhi"* and *"paññā"* should be practised in whatever way suits his ability so that they may grow in strength, for they are a pair which help each other so that neither of them may be deficient in any way. The way of practice in connection with these two Dhammas is as follows:

> If *samādhi* has not yet been achieved at all, one should try to attain it by way of a "preparatory meditation" *(parikamma–bhāvanā),*[36] or by any other method which both suits one's temperament and is able to cause *samādhi* to arise. But if one already has some ability with *samādhi,* one should also develop insight wisdom *(vipassanā–paññā)* when one has the chance to do so after the *citta* rises out of *samādhi* and it has sufficient strength for it.

In doing that investigation with *paññā,* one should analyse the elements *(dhātu)* and *khandhas,* such as the body *(rūpa–khandha),* breaking it apart and investigating its nature, going through it forwards and backwards, in and out, again and again while keeping to the way of seeing the loathsomeness of it all, or the way of seeing it all as the *"Ti–lakkhaṇa" (anicca, dukkha, anattā),* until one becomes skilled and proficient at doing so. After this one rests the *citta* in *samādhi* in the way that one has been accustomed to doing so. In this way, *samādhi* and *paññā* may be practised in an evenly balanced way without doing too little of that Dhamma and too much of this one. Because both *samādhi* and *paññā* are Dhammas which help the *citta* to develop steadily without any deterioration or slackening. Therefore one who practises the way should pay attention to both of them in an even, balanced way, from the beginning to the end of his training and practice for reaching the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna.*

Neither *sīla, samādhi,* nor *paññā* are Dhammas that are out of date nor past their time, but in fact, they are Dhammas which are always suitable and appropriate in every era, every age. They are always unlimited by time *(anantakāla)*

36. *Parikamma Bhāvanā:* This is the initial stage of meditation, both for *samādhi* and *paññā.* In it, one of the regular objects of meditation (such as the breath in *ānāpānasati*) are taken up and continually kept in mind.

and there is no time, place or person that can ever force these Dhammas to change into some other form. They are Dhammas which are suitable to counter every kind of *kilesa* that exist in the hearts of beings and there is nothing else that is more suitable to do this. Therefore, those who practise the way should act properly with these Dhammas which will lead them to cure all the various kinds of *kilesas* so that they fall away from the heart bit by bit.

Sīla, samādhi and *paññā* are the sharpest, most penetrating Dhammas in the teaching of Buddhism and they are used as the tools for curing the *kilesas* of all kinds so that they are completely eliminated. There is not a single one of the *kilesas* which can have more power than these Dhammas, all three of which are interconnected and one cannot single out any one of them which is able to cure all the *kilesas* on its own — they must all function together.

In writing this book — *'Paṭipadā: Venerable Ācariya Mun's Path of Practice'* — it seems as if it is becoming rather disorderly and confusing and may cause the readers to feel a bit confused as well. But this comes from the fact that the practice of Venerable Ajaan Mun's disciples has many aspects and all of them are also included under the heading of the title of this book. Therefore each of the different aspects of practice which each Bhikkhu who takes up the training uses to discipline himself, must be considered separately and explained. Even the ways in which Bhikkhus train themselves by living in the forest has not yet been completed, but it reached a point where it became necessary to turn to other aspects of the training which are derived from living in the forest, which led on to yet other things. So I hope the reader will forgive me for treating some of the topics out of order, but I had to do it this way for the reasons given above.

More About Training & Discipline

Now we will continue with the various ways of training and discipline as used by these Bhikkhus.

When they use any particular method of applying discipline to themselves and they feel that it gives them more strength of heart than other methods, they pay attention to it from then on without slackening or giving up until they

are quite sure that the *citta* no longer displays any resistance and opinionated obstinacy towards it. Thus, when they go to stay in such places as have been described before and they feel quite normal in such places, just as they would anywhere else, they have reached the point where they can stop practising that form of discipline and go on doing their practice in more normal ways.

If they have already managed to train and discipline the *citta,* the result must be of the foregoing kind, such that wherever they live it is satisfactory to them and they do not upset themselves in various ways, such as by the fear of tigers or ghosts. But also, once they have disciplined themselves, even though the *citta* does not display any fear like it used to, if they find that they have contentment of heart when staying in any particular place, they will generally prefer to stay in such a place as their normal dwelling place the whole time.

This is not different from the way they acted in the time of the Lord Buddha, for the *Sāvakas* preferred to live in whatever manner suited their natural inclinations. Thus, some preferred to live in the forests and hills, so they stayed in such places for the remainder of their lives; for example, Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña who only came out of the forests and hills when he was near to the time of his death *(Nibbāna)*[37] and went to see the Lord Buddha to pay his last respects before finally entering *Nibbāna.* None of the younger Bhikkhus or *Sāmaṇeras,* in the place where the Lord was staying, had ever seen him before, wearing his robes dyed with red earth, there being no dark brown or yellow dye from the jack fruit tree available in the deep forests and jungles. So they were uncertain about him, thinking that he was an old wandering monk:

> "And where did he get those robes from?"

So they went to see the Lord Buddha and in accordance with their thoughts they said:

> "Lord please forgive us for troubling you, but we wish to know where this old wandering monk has come from with robes of such a frightful colour. They are red, as if they had been dyed in blood, or what else we don't know?"

37. People in the world generally consider two aspects of Enlightenment, these being "*Sa–Upādisesa–Nibbāna*" and "*Anūpadisesa–Nibbāna*". The former refers to the *Arahant* who is still living, and means "*Nibbāna* with the elements of existence", in other words the 5 *khandhas.* The latter means "*Nibbāna* with no remainder of existence" and refers to the *Arahant* after death. As for the *citta* which is enlightened, these two distinctions must seem artificial.

The Lord saw the wrong attitude of these young Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* who had such doubts that they did not respect this *Mahā Thera* so he spoke to them immediately, saying:

> "This is Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña, the elder brother of all of you and the first of the *Sāvakas* of the *Tathāgata* to reach Dhamma. You must remember your elder brother and keep this in mind from now on, for Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña has been an *Arahant* since the beginning of the *Sāsana* of the *Tathāgata.* He has always behaved and practised in the right manner *(sāmīci–kamma),* habitually living in the forest and hills and having no liking for the involvement and turbulence of crowds of people. But now his body is old and beyond the point where it can be cured with medicines so he left the forest to come and see the *Tathāgata* and to pay his last respects, for before long he will enter *Nibbāna.* It is rare to find any of the 'sons' of the *Tathāgata* who have an inherent liking for living in the forests and hills such as Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña has. So all of you should remember well that the Bhikkhu who has just left the *Tathāgata* is Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña, the first and eldest of the sons of the *Tathāgata* and the most senior of all of you — and not the old wandering monk as all of you thought."

As soon as the Lord Buddha had explained the facts about Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña to them, the young Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* felt sorry and saw their fault in speaking improperly about him to the Great Teacher, without having properly considered the matter beforehand. There also arose great faith and respect in them for Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña, as well as feelings of regret that he had gone away before they had learnt about him from their Great Teacher.

In so far as the Bhikkhu's liking for living in the forest and hills is concerned, the above story is very like that of those who practised following the way of Venerable Ajaan Mun. The main difference is that Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña was an *Arahant* who is known to all Buddhists. But as for those who are followers of Venerable Ajaan Mun, right up to the present day, whatever kinds of Bhikkhus they may be, whether in fact they are like Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña or only *puthujjanas,*[38] I cannot say, so I have just said what I can about it.

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38. *Puthujjana:* An ordinary person. One who has not attained any of the four "Aryan" levels, terminating in *Nibbāna.*

Those Bhikkhus who are determined to train and discipline themselves by living in the forest and hills and by using the method of reducing their food, take less than normal all the time. In saying that they reduce their food, this means that they eat little, that they do not eat what the body wants, nor under the dictation of craving *(taṇhā)* which may infiltrate into them at times. Thus they may try eating 70% or 60%, maybe going down to 40% of normal until they find what suits them, or in some circumstances they may increase and then reduce their food intake. But they try all the time to maintain a reduced diet; or maybe they look upon it as a practice which goes together as a partner with all the other methods of practice which they do for long periods of time — for one or two or many months, as it suits their practice of *citta–bhāvanā* and the physical body without going too far so that they become sick and too weak with hunger. Therefore they try to aid and promote their striving until the body shows untoward reactions, or until the *citta* improves to such an extent that they no longer need the aid of this method of training and discipline. In which case they can go on smoothly and steadily, and they may even be able to give up taking so little food. But this depends on each individual case and it is not the invariable rule.

As far as we know, all those Bhikkhus who have ever gained strength of heart from any particular method will hold to that method and they are never likely to let it go into degradation. For however high their strength of heart may become, they will generally have developed special skills and techniques on the path along which they have been going all the time, and it is as if they see the value of it and always think of that method with heartfelt appreciation. If one thinks of that method as though it were a person, one would say that one appreciates the value and virtue of that one who has been of such great value to oneself. Or again, if one thinks of it in terms of Dhamma, one would recollect the value of that Dhamma which has been of such value to oneself, like the Lord Buddha who bowed in homage to the Dhamma for example.

When reducing food intake, the eating of only a little makes all parts of the body become light. Its strength decreases so that it does not bother the *citta*, which makes the practice of *bhāvanā* more easy and the attainment of calm to be quicker than it normally would be, when one does not reduce food. (This applies only to those whose nature suits this practice).

In doing the practice of *bhāvanā* while taking little food, the heart does not usually have its ups and downs in connection with calm. This differs from

its normal state in the early stages of practice when one does not reduce food and the *citta* is at such a level of development that it still needs training. When one takes little food, walking *caṅkama* is easy, sitting in *samādhi* one feels contented and both during the day and at night one's *bhāvanā* will generally give similar results. Whereas normally, when walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi*, night is the time when the bodily constitution is more subtle and it always tend to go better than during the day. But for the person who likes eating little, both times give similar results.

If one fasts for many days, feelings of hunger and weakness arise often, but the *citta* tends to be much more subtle than when one only reduces one's food intake, and both in *samādhi* and *paññā* one has much more skill and dexterity.

In fasting, the Bhikkhus generally start by fasting for a short time and then gradually increase the time until they are fasting for long periods. In other words, to begin with they fast between two and five days to try it out. But as soon as they see that they get good results in their *bhāvanā,* they increase the time steadily to eight or nine days at a time, depending on circumstances.

In the period when they are fasting they continue with the work of *bhāvanā* and they also keep a watch on the *citta* and the body. If they see that they are altogether in a good state they continue alternately fasting at times and eating food at times. As they steadily increase their fasting they may go on for many days at a time, some reaching fifteen or eighteen days, and there are some who continue fasting for a month when the situation is favourable. While fasting like this, if the body feels very weak, they may take a little milk on some days.

For those who find that fasting suits their nature, while fasting there is great value to be gained of many different kinds, as follows. After the first two nights of fasting one no longer gets tired or sleepy, and after several nights have passed this becomes stronger so that sleepiness is no longer a disturbance. Wherever one sits, the body remains erect like a post without nodding or fidgeting at all. Mindfulness *(sati)* is good and doesn't slip away, there is little absent-mindedness and the longer one goes on, the better mindfulness becomes so that one almost never forgets oneself. When thoughts about anything arise in the *citta,* one's mindfulness immediately catches up with them almost every time, without even having to set up the resolve not to let one's mindfulness slip away forgetfully, for it remains there on its own quite natu-

rally. This may be because the fasting which one does is for the purpose of striving for one's development and because one has set up one's mindfulness and continually maintained it from the first day one went on fast. Therefore one's mindfulness does not tend to slip and be forgotten at the beginning of the fast, nor for the remainder of it, however many days it may go on.

The work of *bhāvanā* then tends to go on smoothly and skilfully all the time and in every way, both in *samādhi* and *paññā*. When one wants to rest the *citta* down in *samādhi* one can do so, as one wants to. When one wants to investigate by way of *paññā* after the *citta* has arisen out of *samādhi, paññā* will be of the kind that becomes steadily more skilful as one goes on, and it will not be sluggish and inert as it usually is when one does the practice of investigation. In all the various attitudes and postures of the body mindfulness will be present and one is not easily distracted or led away by anything. When one investigates anything that happens to arise, the heart catches up with it very quickly and can understand it clearly and much faster than usual. Then the body has hardly any of the normal aches and pains and it feels unusually light. The *citta* will also be able to see dangers with ease and it does not tend to oppose the truth and be very stubborn as it used to.

Those who are at the level of *samādhi* will then be calm in all bodily situations and postures; and those who are at the level of *paññā* will always be possessed of contemplation and thought, analysing causes and results in those things of endless kinds which they encounter. The *citta* is then engrossed in doing the investigation by looking into every one of the *dhammā,*[39] meanwhile all trace of tiredness and fatigue has disappeared, as if they were eating food as normal.

If any feelings of tiredness, hunger or weakness arise, it will only come when the *citta* withdraws from *samādhi,* or when the *citta* takes a rest from doing the investigation, or again when one comes out of *samādhi* to change the attitude or posture of the body, then one is likely to feel it. The reason for there being no feelings of hunger or weakness when the *citta* enters *samādhi* and when investigating all the *dhammas,* is because the *citta* is completely engrossed in *samādhi* and *paññā* and it has no interest in paying attention to the physical body. Therefore in effect, there is no bodily feeling at that time.

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39. *Dhammā* (plural) means "objects of mind" either sensory, as in memories of past sense perception, or non-sensory, as in thoughts about principles of Dhamma, logic and worldly principles. The anglicised form of the plural — *dhammas* — is often used in English writings.

When the day comes that one decides to eat food, a dispute arises between the *citta* and the body-mind group *(khandhas)* and they cannot agree together. The body-mind group say that they are weak and want food and supporting nutritional aids to sustain life. On the other hand the *citta* says that while fasting, the practice of *bhāvanā* is good and the heart is calm, clear and not disturbed by all sorts of things, but as soon as one has eaten *bhāvanā* deteriorates. For, once one is full of food one thinks only of one's pillow and sleeping instead of Dhamma and its subtle meanings as happens when one is fasting. Therefore it does not want to eat, because after eating, *bhāvanā* does not go properly, whereas the body will be strong, which is good. Thus, between the *citta* and the body-mind group there is a dispute of this kind.

The "owner"[40] must decide which way to go. To fast at times and to eat well at times is a good way. For the *citta* gains benefits while the body knows how to put up with deprivation, without taking more and more nourishment until it becomes excessive, which is the way of animals, only eating and sleeping all the time. One cannot stand too much fasting for the body is bound to start breaking up. On the other hand, to fill up with food makes one lazy so that one goes looking for one's pillow, rather than for Dhamma and its meaning, as happens when one fasts. Thus it is that fasting has many benefits as described above.

The time when one is fasting is the time for increasing one's effort to its maximum capacity in all positions and postures of the body. One sleeps little; one sleeps just for a short time which is enough for the needs of the body, but it gets rid of all nodding and drowsiness. For those whose nature is suited to this method, it will enable them to see both *samādhi* and *paññā* for themselves, right there, in the present.

The feelings of hunger that arise strongly at times will only persist for the first two or three days, after that it diminishes for many days, but the feeling of weakness tends to increase. The *citta* then becomes steadily more subtle and skilful from the first day of the fast onwards. It is this which, when the time comes to eat food again, causes the *citta* to be sorry and to want to go on fasting. But the physical body feels that it can not stand it any longer, so one must give way to it to some extent, otherwise it will cease to function properly, and the body-mind group will fall apart before the *kilesas* are cured and got rid of. So one must apply the remedy, for if one were to follow the desires of one's heart, the body would almost certainly not survive. But if

40. "Owner" is a way of referring to that part of oneself which takes responsibility. It is a term used by those who practise *Kammaṭṭhāna.*

one were to give way entirely and let the body have just what it wants, the heart would not be likely to "drink" Dhamma as it should be able to and as one intends that it should.

Fasting gives results which are quite evident, both in *samādhi* and *paññā*, which leads one to reflect upon the Lord Buddha when he practised his most rigorous austerities and took no food, with the intention of gaining Enlightenment[41] just by fasting, without any striving by way of the heart. While he was doing this, no results were to be seen, but when he took the sweet rice-milk which Lady Sujātā brought and gave him, even though he had taken some food that evening, every part of his body still remained bright, light and vibrant. Then that same night, as soon as the Lord developed mindfulness of breathing *(ānāpānasati),* which is work done by way of the heart, it enabled the Lord to gain Enlightenment that night.

It seems likely that the effect on the Lord's body which came from the fasting he had done was a help to his heart in that it prevented the body from being too much of a burden on the heart at that time. Even though the Lord censured fasting, saying that it was not the way that he attained Enlightenment, it is probable that he did not intend this to include fasting for the purpose of aiding the work of development in the sphere of the heart. It is likely that he meant only, fasting as the sole means of attaining Enlightenment — which is the wrong way. Because the attainment of Enlightenment, or reaching Dhamma, refers to the heart as being the important one and not the body at all, due to the fact that the *kilesas* dwell only in the heart and not in the body.

However, to the extent that the body is a supporting condition for the *kilesas*, it can cause them to increase and become strong. This can be the case when, for example, the constitution of the body is at full strength and it displays this fact and is immediately obvious to the well trained heart which knows that, "the *khandhas* are getting out of hand". But if there are also *kilesas* in the heart they are bound to be drawn in so that they flare up. Then one way and another one will not be able to keep up with them and they will lead one down until one is completely submerged in the mud. When the time comes that one's wits return, one realises what has happened — if one looks. But if one does not look, one will never have any means of knowing what happens, so one gives way and allows the *kilesas* and the body-mind group *(dhātu–khandha)* to lead one into whatever they will. This is how the *kilesas* and the body become

41. Lit: "clear knowing of Dhamma". It is the standard Thai expression for what is called "Enlightenment" in English.

associated together. But on their own, the body-mind group are no danger to the *citta* when the *citta* is pure.

From the above, one may see that fasting is very helpful for the practice of *citta bhāvanā* in some characters. Therefore the Lord did not completely forbid fasting when it was used in connection with *bhāvanā*. This may be seen in some of the *Vinaya*[42] rules concerning fasting, thus:

> "A Bhikkhu who fasts for the purpose of showing off to the world commits an offence every time he goes on fast, and also, every time he acts in any way for the purpose of showing off his fasting. But if he fasts for the purpose of striving by way of the heart, he may do so. This the *Tathāgata* allows."

This may have been because the Lord saw the value of fasting as an aid to striving by way of the heart in those cases which are characteristically suited to this method. Therefore the Lord gave permission to use it and did not forbid it entirely.

In those whose characteristics are not suited to fasting, if they were to do so it is probable that they would gain no value from it. This is similar to the practice of those forms of *kammaṭṭhāna* which do not suit a person's nature, and here, the saying that one man's meat is another man's poison, is quite applicable.

From what I have actually seen, even nowadays there seem to be many people whose nature is well suited to fasting, and this is the reason that I have included this discussion here for the reader to think about. In particular, at Wat Pa Baan Taad which is my own monastery, there are many Bhikkhus who like to go on fast often, in fact it is almost as though the whole monastery takes turns to go on fast. This happens all the time and has continued since the monastery was first founded, and it goes on throughout the dry season, the wet season and both in the *vassa* period and out of it. Nowadays, there are still those who fast in the monastery in the same way, including the English and other western born Bhikkhus who like fasting. For they say that when they fast their *bhāvanā* goes better than when they do not, so they do it frequently. This, they also do from their own volition, for there is no compulsion or coercion to fast at all.

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42. *Vinaya:* the first section of the old Buddhist texts *(Ti–piṭaka)* which record the talks and sayings of the Lord Buddha. The *Vinaya* details all the rules of morality and behaviour for the monks, as well as all the stories leading up to them.

The Western Bhikkhus are able to fast quite as well as the Thai Bhikkhus and they can do so for many days at a time, then they eat for one or two days before continuing to fast. Some fast for up to fourteen or fifteen days and they stand up to it well, whereas others go on for nine or ten days. They are quite able to fast like this in the same way as our Thai Bhikkhus do. When asked, they say that while fasting the *citta* has much less tendency to be restless and uncontrollable. It can then be governed more easily and it is both calm and peaceful and also more stable, and it is not easily distracted or disturbed. Therefore it makes them want to fast often so that the *citta* may advance as fast as it ought to.

This makes us feel sympathy with them and glad that they have made the effort to come so far across the ocean to become ordained in the Buddha *Sāsana,* to take up the moral precepts and *bhāvanā* with hardships and deficiencies. They have to take food which is unfamiliar and to be separated from their home, parents and relatives for many years and they do not complain of being homesick or longing for their country, friends and relatives with whom they had lived in close contact at all.

It would seem that these Western Bhikkhus became ordained with the true purpose of searching for Dhamma and development which accords with their having been born into a race which is intrinsically clever; although they never show any signs of being haughty or conceited. In fact, in all ways they have a humility and modesty which is worthy of respect and in their relations with other Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* in the monastery they behave well and act properly.

Nearly all the Western Bhikkhus who are in this monastery like to fast, without any persuasion being used. They just see the other Bhikkhus going on fast and ask about it, and when they understand the reasons they try it for themselves, and after that they are regularly seen to be on fast. When they are asked about it they say that their *bhāvanā* is better than usual, so from then on they go on fast regularly.

In particular, in the *vassa* period which is a time that is free from other things, and a time when the Bhikkhus increase their efforts to practise the way in this monastery, there are some days when very few Bhikkhus go out for *piṇḍapāta* and eat food together, for when they do not eat, there is no need to go for *piṇḍapāta.*

Each Bhikkhu fasts for whatever length of time suits him; some go on for four or five days, some go on for longer times up to 12 days or a fortnight or more, until the end of the *vassa* period. This includes both Thai and foreign Bhikkhus who fast in the same way and for many days equally.

At this monastery, during the *vassa* period, every seven days there is a Dhamma meeting to aid and promote the effort which is put into developing the way of the heart so that it shall progress in accordance with the favourableness of the prevailing conditions. After the *vassa* period has ended work and duties become very troublesome in connection with people coming and going for Dhamma, for *sīla* and *dāna* and various good actions (*kusala* deeds), which are in the nature of Thai people who are Buddhists. They have been used to doing these things for generations for they have always been considered as the heart of those who are Buddhists right from the beginning. Therefore it is most praiseworthy, for such acts as this are not only good actions giving beneficial results to those who do them, but they are also setting a good precedent for the young people of the next generation to follow.

The self-training methods of the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who follow after Venerable Ajaan Mun are many and varied, for they differ in each individual case. In writing about them it is therefore necessary to divide them up into various categories, in accordance with those cases in which the methods of training differed from each other. This is so that you who read this with practical interest can take up and gain value from any of the methods of the *Ācariyas* which you consider to be suitable to your character and your situation in life.

Some of the *Ācariyas* who set out to practise *kammaṭṭhāna* with practical interest never experienced the *citta* dropping into a state of calm and unity for years. But as soon as they learnt about some skilful methods of training and discipline in various ways which were recommended by the *Ācariyas,* and their friends and contemporaries in Dhamma, and took them up and tried them out selectively, to their liking, the *citta* steadily became calm and peaceful and they were able to establish firm and strong roots of the *citta.* This was because the method of training was right for their characters; as for example, those who managed to make the *citta* go down into a concentrated state when fear arose at the sound of tigers roaring in the vicinity of the place where they were staying — which would not otherwise have been possible.

Therefore, the character of the person and the means of Dhamma which are used for training are both important and necessary for all who practise the way in each and every case. Thus, for example, in those whose *citta* is strong, active and venturesome, who do not easily submit to the *Ācariya* or anyone else, it is necessary for them to be their own *Ācariya* and to train and discipline themselves, using their own methods which are inherently and especially rough and strong.

Some Bhikkhus like to go and live where they are hard pressed and up against it, having to put up with a lack of the four requisites. Sometimes doing without, sometimes having enough, but generally lacking amenities and hard up. And also living in very frightening places to force and drive themselves on. Because people of every class and age have characteristic tendencies which react well to being forced, ever since the day they were born. For there is no way in which we can develop ourselves and prosper by letting go and relaxing. It requires both ourselves and others to help drive us on towards all types of virtue and benefit. This we can see from the way in which our parents got angry at times, scolding and treating us harshly, and also the way that the *Ācariyas* practice towards us and how they normally use words of rebuke and admonishment in close connection with all the Dhamma which they teach and train those who live constantly under their care and guidance. To use only pleasant and soft words in the teaching is not likely to be suitable to all conditions and occasions, because some cases respond well to a "hot and spicy flavour". So the teaching must have both the harsh and mild methods blended together.

Speaking of rebuke and admonishment makes me think with gratitude of the excellence of Venerable Ajaan Mun, for the way in which he used to scold me and the other Bhikkhus at times when we had done something wrong. When he was doing this his attitude and expression was most awe inspiring while castigating and shaping up his followers who had been stupid, so as to make them become true people by using rebuke and admonishment. Looking at those who were being rebuked and admonished made one feel very sorry for them, because they were so frightened that they shivered — like baby birds in the rain — but the result of this was that it remained fixed in the heart for a long time. This is the kind of result that comes from others to help one in one's training.

As for the results which come from training oneself, those Venerable Ones who have trained themselves to the utmost of their strength and ability will know clearly for themselves what they are. As for instance, those who have gained a complete calm of heart from walking *caṅkama* after being afraid, due to the sound of tigers roaring, and then the *citta* turning round and becoming bold and fearless while still walking, in such a manner as one would not have believed to be possible. Because of this, training oneself is a very important way of working, which those who wish to progress in their own development cannot afford to overlook, both in the direction of the world and in the direction of Dhamma.

5

Stories of Bhikkhus Who Practise

The reader should please understand that in all the forms of practice which are described herein and which are associated with the practice of *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* I have tried in all cases to write only what is factually true, which I have seen or heard from the *Ācariyas* who have received training under Venerable Ajaan Mun. This applies both to the causal conditions; how, in one case, this Bhikkhu has such and such characteristics so he liked to train himself in this way, whereas that Bhikkhu liked to train himself in that way; and also to the results which they attained from their training mixed together with their causes, which we have been relating and will continue to go on doing so. But the names of these *Ācariyas* who have done these things and attained the results will not be disclosed, so as to guard those things which should be kept to oneself. There may however be exceptions to this when it is necessary to disclose the identity of an *Ācariya.*[43]

When I use such expressions as "some Bhikkhus", or "in some case the Bhikkhus like training themselves by this method" for example, the reader should please understand that this is an indirect way of naming a Bhikkhu. Thus the words "some Bhikkhus" or "some cases" in fact stands for the name of a particular Bhikkhu who trained and disciplined himself by such and such a method — like fasting, or walking *caṅkama* while competing with the sound of tigers roaring, for example.

In addition every offshoot of the methods of training and discipline which these Bhikkhus used, is a method in itself from which they have gained results that are distinct and certain. Therefore as they have all been tested in practice I have included them herein. For it must be stated that none of this writing has come from speculation or guess work, for if it had, there would be no certainty whether the results would be real and permanent, nor whether

43. Since the time this was written, many of the *Ācariyas* have died. In these cases the names have been revealed in this translation.

they would be acceptable amongst those who practise the way. So the reader should please understand that these writings, both those which I have completed up to this point and those yet to come, are in accordance with the true facts of what happened in the case of each Bhikkhu. But whether it is right or wrong to write such things is my responsibility as being a writer who has the tendency to put down everything without sufficient consideration, which has always been my natural inclination. Therefore, as always, I hope that you will forgive me for this.

The methods of self-training and discipline which these Bhikkhus used, until they became *Ācariyas* teaching Bhikkhus, Novices and other people up to the present day, seem to be activities which nobody has come across before, which have never been heard of before and which never have been thought of as methods of training oneself. Nor would one think, in this present day society, which wants to get results more than doing the work that causes them, that there are those who are daring enough to do these things which put their lives at risk. For life is the thing which people want and preserve more than anything else in the world. But in fact, there are those who do these things and who are ready to take the risks involved until they are a "vital nature" which survives death. If they also come to know Dhamma from the use of these methods, they may be said to be the "death defying Dhamma" of each of these Bhikkhus, because the cause goes beyond death, so the result should equally go beyond death. But such causes and results as those are unlikely to come to Bhikkhus whose interest is in thinking and firmly believing that their lives are so very valuable. Even if they were to think of going in for these methods, they would probably not be able to get into the way of them fully and intimately, because of their overpowering love of their lives which conceals the value of the Dhamma which they have within themselves so that they cannot see it.

On the other hand, there are those Bhikkhus whose interest in the principles of truth is equal to, or greater than their concern for lives; for if they were to let go of these principles it would only result in their lives being in continual disorder and turmoil without any purpose or path. Such Bhikkhus will carefully think over and make tests by comparing what happened to the *Ācariyas* and what has happened to themselves, and how their lives are now, in so far as going into the principles of truth is concerned, and in what aspects they are superior or inferior to the *Ācariyas.* Thus for example:

> "I have done these things in this way, but why did they do them in that way without any fear that *Maccu–rāja* — the Lord of Death — would laugh and mock at them? Is there anything hidden and obstructing the truths of Dhamma which is different between myself and them? How can they do these things and take the risks and know that they have experienced various things both superficial and deep, revealed and secret from those methods? Nor did they throw their lives away uselessly in using these methods of training and discipline. So the causes and the results which came from them are their own valuable possessions, the signs of which are still there for us to read about now, in the present. They also had physical bodies which are things that they must have cherished much in the same way as I do, and they were individual people who probably had feelings of the same sort as people everywhere. But then, how were they brave enough to make such a sacrifice — and for what? Those things which they did, I have not done yet, and those things which they knew, I have never known. But why? We are all people in the same way, and we all desire those things which are so good and so valuable. So I should take up one of their methods which is well suited to my *citta* and my ability and go and practise it myself to try it out and see what the results will be like."

If one is interested in using reasoned thought to round up the mind, and lead it toward the principles of truth which accord with the Dhamma that the Lord taught, then regardless of sex or age there is sure to be a way that one can accept and take up and use and gain value from. Because "truth" does not depend in any particular way on sex or age, but upon reasoned thought and searching for the ground of truth which is in every person.

Those *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who practised and developed themselves until they became very impressive people, to such an extent that we have seen fit to include their stories here for you to read about, all showed that they had a strong and firm intention and longing for the results which they were aiming for. Therefore they did not think, when they put all their strength and effort into attaining those results, that they would find it difficult or easy, whether they would live or die and gain or lose. They just had the single unshakeable resolve that they could succeed, without a thought of the difficulties and the possibility of whether they would live or die. Because, due to the effort that they were making the results of their efforts, which

they hoped for, began to come steadily, and they were results of such a nature as they had never experienced before, which made them forget all their fears entirely. These things which seem so amazing to others who have never come across them are to be found in plenty of cases amongst the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* such as those you can read about in the remainder of this book.

A First Encounter With a Tiger

Now we will turn to the story of one of the *Ācariyas* who at this time was walking *caṅkama,* back and forth in front of a cave in the hills at night without any thought that anything unusual may happen. Because while walking *caṅkama* he had hung up a candle lantern[44] which gave enough light to see where he was walking quite clearly, and normally wild animals know that fire is an indication of the presence of human beings. But as soon as this *Ācariya* had become absorbed in walking *caṅkama* he heard the sound of a tiger making a threatening roar at one side and slightly above the path where he was walking, about four yards away, after which it continued to roar on and off.

As soon as he heard it, the *Ācariya* knew it was the sound of a tiger and right then he was afraid in his *citta* and he stopped and looked in the direction from which the sound came. But he did not see the tiger and so continued to walk *caṅkama.* Almost immediately he heard it roar again, so he stopped walking and once more tried to see it, but he still could not get even a glimpse of it. Meanwhile his feelings of fear continued to increase all the time, until he shivered and broke out in a cold sweat which drenched him, and this despite the fact that it was the cold season and the weather was very cold just then. But he roused up his courage and resisted the temptation to flee away; meanwhile the tiger kept on growling. So he looked for a way to shake himself out of this state, to gain courage and take control of himself, and he thought like this:

> "I have taken up the practice of Dhamma in the same way as they did it at the time of the Lord Buddha when they acted with great courage and

44. These lanterns are well known amongst the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus.* They consist of two metal (tin, aluminium, etc...) discs about 5 inches diameter fixed to a tube or cylinder of thin cotton, one at each end. The top disc has a hole in it about 3 inches diameter and a candle is fixed to the centre of the lower disc. They are usually hung from a suitable support and give a good, even light.

were willing to make all kinds of sacrifice, even including their own lives, without any longing or regrets. In those days it is said that there were many animals and tigers which could be dangerous to Bhikkhus, but there do not seem to have been any cases in which those wild animals ever took Bhikkhus to eat as food. Even if there were such cases, very few of them have ever been recorded — maybe only one or two cases. Yet those Bhikkhus attained Dhamma, brought their *kilesas* to an end and taught the way to the world until people gained confidence and faith in them and looked on them as their refuge. This has continued right up to the present day and it doesn't seem that the tigers ever took them to eat as food."

"As for myself, I am a monk in the Buddhist religion in the same way as they were at the time of the Lord Buddha and I am practising the way to attain the same Dhamma, leading to the one goal, which is the Path, Fruition, and *Nibbāna (Magga–Phala–Nibbāna).* But why then, as soon as I hear the sound of a tiger coming to visit me and ask me how I am getting on, do I stand stiff and shiver like someone who is out of his mind and jealously attached to his body, life and heart as if I am not ready to die, in the same way as people in the world, even when their time has come. Why then am I stubbornly resisting this fact of nature which has ever been the way of the world, even to the point where I am standing here shivering, jealously attached to life wanting only not to die? And why am I standing here stiff and opposing the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha in this way? Am I not ashamed in the face of this tiger which is roaring at me — with laughter, right now? If I am not ashamed before the tiger, why do I not think of turning inward so as to be ashamed before myself, a *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who is standing here shivering? This should be enough to make me mindful and wake me up and remind me that I am a Bhikkhu, with a vocation and one who has willingly given up everything. But here I am standing and shivering because I have more concern for my life than for Dhamma, which is more gross than the ways of animals. And that tiger is also an animal whereas I am a man and a full *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu.* Then why should I be so afraid of this tiger; there is no sense in it; and supposing now, while I am so afraid of this tiger and standing here shivering like a puppy in cold water, that my teacher, my *Ācariya* should send his *citta*[45] to see what is happening here. He would laugh at me just like the tiger is laughing now, and where should I hide my face? This that I am doing is quite disgraceful, and it is bringing

45. In other words, to use clairvoyance to see what he was doing.

disgrace upon Buddhism, on my teacher, my *Ācariya*, as well as all those who practise who are all *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* in a way that is really obnoxious. Just now it is as if I am being a clown, for the tiger and all the *Devatās* who live in the vicinity of this hill to laugh at, so that I have no face left. What should I do in order to redeem Buddhism and those that are Buddhists so that they will not be denigrated like rotten fish being sold in the market, for at this moment I am in the role of the merchant advertising them for sale."

While he was calming down and scolding himself, he was in a state of confusion and anxiety, and the tiger kept on showing its derision by roaring — with laughter — while resting from time to time. As if it was warning him that he must become mindful and control himself with those methods of Dhamma which he was thinking and searching for in confusion, and he must also act in a decisive and true way, right at that time. It seems that he was still resisting the tendency to run away and gradually his mindfulness returned to him, and with it a method or way came to him, thus:

"Whatever beings there may be, whether tigers or people or myself; within Dhamma, the Lord has taught that we are all companions, in that we all have suffering (dukkha), birth, growing old, pain and death in the same way without exception. Even this tiger which is growling at me, and I who am so afraid of it that I have almost gone mad, when each of us have birth, growing old, pain and death as our lot in the same way, what is the use of being afraid? Whether I am afraid or not I am bound to die when I have reached my time, for there is no being anywhere who can avoid this. I came here to practise the way of the *Samaṇa* Dhamma without envy and without any intention to harm any beings. If then this tiger wants my flesh and blood to increase its vitality so that it can go on living from day to day, I should be happy to make this generous gift to it. It would be much better to do this than to stand here in this dull way, jealously clinging to this living corpse so strongly that I am shivering all over, while still not being ready to move it away elsewhere."

"Those who have been ordained are those who make sacrifices and not those who cling on jealously with so much concern for their lives that it is shameful and a disgrace to themselves and to the religion. Since I was born I have been eating the flesh, skin and meat of all sorts of animals which the Dhamma teaches us to be our friends and equals in both growing old, pain

and death, and this has been the food that has enabled me to grow up to my present size. Almost as if I should not feel any pain if I were pinched or scratched because of the flesh and skin of all these animals covering me. And now, when the time has come that I should be ready to sacrifice my skin and flesh and make a gift of it to this tiger, why am I so tight and stingy as a miser, jealously holding on to it? In addition I am still tenaciously clinging to this body so tight that it is shivering, and this attachment is so strong that I have been unable to get rid of it. But what is worse is that I have reasoned about it, yet the *citta* will not accept it nor will it either believe or listen to Dhamma. Then in this case it must surely mean that my ordination as a Bhikkhu is for the sake of pure selfishness, because my fear of the demonic *kilesas* is so strong that I have had no consideration for anything else in the world."

"If I believe in the *kilesas* more than Dhamma, then I must remain standing here shivering and looking after this body, this mass of discontent which is here. But if I believe in the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, I must sacrifice this blood and flesh to the tiger for it to take as food so as to maintain its life. It is no good waiting about, so what is it going to be, the way of Dhamma or a jump into the awful whirlpool of miserly attachment? Quick! Make a decision! Don't waste the time of the tiger who is waiting and listening for this monk, who comes from the line of those who renounce things and make sacrifices, to declare his courage based upon wisdom which has carefully considered the situation, — and say: 'Whether to give way or cling tightly'."

This intense battle between the tiger and the *Ācariya* probably went on for about an hour, with neither side being prepared to give way to the other. Finally the *Ācariya* decided that he would give way, because he could see the danger in being possessively attached to life. His heart then turned about and became courageous and brim full of *mettā* and sympathy for that tiger by taking the teaching of a verse of the Dhammapada as the basic principle in his heart, thus:

"All beings are companions in suffering, birth, growing old, pain and death, without exception."

When he saw the image of the tiger in his imagination, which had been his enemy, it was changed and became the image of a close friend and he thought how he would like to stroke it and play with it with love and sympathy and truly heart felt intimacy. So he left his path for walking *caṅkama,* taking his lantern which was hung up at one side of the path, and walked straight towards the tiger with kindness and *mettā* in his heart. But when he got to the place where he thought the tiger would be, it was no longer there, so he went in search of it going all over the forest in that region. Yet the whole time he was walking about searching for the tiger, full of courage, kindness and *mettā,* he saw no sign of it at all and he never knew where it had mysteriously disappeared to. After he had been searching for it for some time without finding it, he became tired of it. Then something spoke up within his heart, as if someone had come to warn him, saying:

> "Why are you searching for it? Both knowing and delusion are just within oneself and are not to be found in any other being, nor in this or any other tiger. The fear of death which almost drove you mad a short while ago is just your own delusion. And the knowledge of the Buddha Dhamma which teaches that 'all beings are companions in suffering, birth, growing old, pain and death, without exception', which enabled you to relinquish your possessive attachment entirely, so that your *citta* became full of *mettā* and kindness and a friend to all the world, is also just your own knowledge. Both of these states are the property of nobody except yourself, so what else are you searching for? When there is knowing, the one who knows should have mindfulness and energy and this is right and proper. But to go on searching for anything from other beings, or from this tiger is turning it back into wrong understanding again."

As soon as this knowledge which spoke up within him and came to an end, his mindfulness immediately returned to him. The *Ācariya* said that, while he was walking and searching for the tiger, he was quite sure that the tiger was a close and intimate friend of his and that he could pet it and stroke it and fondle it as much as he wanted to, and he never thought that it would do any harm to him at all. But whether this would have been the case or not he did not know.

After this he returned and went on walking *caṅkama* fully at ease, without any anxiety or fear remaining at all. Meanwhile the intermittent roars and

growls, which he had previously heard, had ceased and never reappeared either that night or for the remainder of the time that he stayed in that area.

The *Ācariya* said that it was quite wonderful how the *citta* which was so frightened it could hardly keep the body standing upright and almost went mad, was able to turn and become bold and courageous as soon as it was mastered and disciplined in various ways; and how it was then quite prepared to give up flesh, blood and life and sacrifice them to the tiger without any fear and trembling or longing for life at all.

He said that since then whenever he walked *caṅkama* or sat in meditation practice, if the *citta* would not calm down easily he would think of the tiger wishing that it would search him out and often let him hear its roars. Then his *citta* would be roused up and alert and at least it would become calm. Beyond that his heart would change and become full of *mettā* and kindness and happy in sympathy with all animals — and tigers. Because when the heart changes in this way due to the sounds of all sorts of animals, as well as the tiger, the happiness which arises is most subtle and beyond description.

There is a further short passage which the writer forgot to include before, which arose in the heart of the *Ācariya* while he was out searching for the tiger. He said that it came to him as follows:

> "*Mettā* which is experienced as kindness and gentleness is a close and harmonious intimacy with all beings. Both those who would be enemies and all others, including all people, the *Devatās, Indra, Brahma, Yama,* the *Yakkhas* and Demons, and all throughout the three realms *(Ti–loka–dhātu),* and at such a time there are none that can be seen as enemies. The hearts of all the Buddhas and *Arahants* are full of boundless *mettā* for all beings and those who have *mettā* are always happy whether awake or asleep."

What was said then seemed to be a teaching directed to myself alone, arising softly in the *citta,* to be heard and known just by myself alone. I can remember much of it quite clearly but I cannot recall everything that was said which I regret now.

Living in the forest and hills which are lonely, desolate places is likely to be unusually beneficial, and particularly so for those whose aim and intention is for Dhamma. As for example in the case of the aforementioned *Ācariya* who told us how his *citta* became kind and gentle towards all beings, without exception, including the tiger which he wanted to meet, to fondle and caress and play with in sympathy.

I believe the truth of this story without reservation, because I once had a similar experience. At one time I also became very frightened so that I could hardly control myself. So I tried using a method to train and restrain myself, much in the same way as the foregoing *Ācariya.* Until the *citta* was cured of its stubborn resistance and became courageous and gentle with *mettā* and was able to go and search for its enemies, of all types, without any apprehension at all. So as soon as I heard the story of this *Ācariya* I immediately felt deeply impressed by his story which showed that there are still those who practise the way of the forests and the wilds in the same way as I had done. Before this I thought that I was the only one to have done this. Because it is not easy to explain this sort of thing to people, due to its being outside the normally accepted limits within which people everywhere think and consider.

6

The Ascetic Practices (Dhutangas)

Each one of the thirteen *Dhutanga* practices are capable of subjugating the *kilesas* of all kinds, and this they are able to do in the most wonderful manner which is almost impossible to anticipate. But they have already been elucidated in the biography of Venerable Ajaan Mun sufficiently well, so we will not give any lengthy explanation of them here, although it must be kept in mind that all the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* who are followers of Venerable Ajaan Mun, in their various ways continue to maintain those practices which were in line with his tradition.

Those of the thirteen *Dhutangas* which have been elucidated in Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography are as follows (unless the writer's memory is at fault):

1. Dwelling under the shade of a tree.
2. Going *piṇḍapāta* as a regular duty.
3. Eating from the bowl.
4. Eating only once a day.
5. Using only *paṁsukūla* robes.[46]
6. Not accepting any food given after the *piṇḍapāta* round.

Any further explanation of these will only be minor additions to those that have already been given.

Having written the above, I went and talked about it with some of my colleagues, saying that I was not going to repeat my explanation of the *Dhutangas* because it was already in Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography. But most of them thought that the explanation of the *Dhutangas* should be repeated here because one cannot be sure that all who read this will also have read Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography. Some may never have seen it and thus they may not have a chance to know how important the *Dhutanga* observances are in the practice of Dhamma. So finally I decided that it was necessary to include some explanation of them. But I ask for the indulgence of those who have already

46. *Paṁsukūla* robes: robes made from discarded cloth.

read about the *Dhutangas* in Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography, that they do not become irritated by the repetition, and understand that this has been included to help those who have never learnt anything about the thirteen *Dhutanga* observances.

The Dhutanga observance of dwelling under the shade of a tree *(rukkhamūla)* was the first of the *Dhutanga*s to be practised by the Lord Buddha. On the day when he penetrated Dhamma (Enlightenment) and the three worlds shook, he was sitting under the shade of a tree — the great Bodhi tree which Buddhists have looked upon as a sacred tree and synonymous with Buddhism *(Sāsana)* and the Great Teacher *(Sāsadā),* right up to the present day. Also, when the Lord entered *Parinibbāna,* it occurred under the shade of trees — the twin Sala trees. This is what is meant by *"rukkhamūla"* in this *Dhutanga* observance.

Living in a hut, roofed and closed about gives security against various dangers, which is very different from living under the shade of a tree. This can be learnt from those who have stayed both indoors in a hut or *vihāra* and also *"rukkhamūla",* under the shade of a tree where it is lonely. The heart feels how the first is warm and cosy while the second is very lonely, and how different they are. This is even more so when either the hut or the tree shade are in a lonely, desolate forest full of wild animals including tigers. One who does this will see quite clearly that there is a remarkable difference between the hut and the shade of a tree. Living in a hut in desolate forest can be enjoyable, for one can sit relaxed and lie down rather than finding enjoyment in the meditation practice — which deteriorates. For, doing it in this way is comfortable and free from all sorts of fears and uncertainties.

As for someone who stays under the shade of a tree in desolate forest, without any protection, so that he has nowhere to escape to where he could sit or lie down in comfort and relaxed, he must be on guard against ever present dangers whatever he does. His mindfulness and his *citta* have no time when they can part from each other, for fear that he may be caught at a disadvantage whenever danger approaches, which may come at any time, whatever he is doing.

In these two ways of staying in the forest, the differences as regards the pleasurableness of the one and the uneasiness of the other, is very great. One who stays under the shade of a tree will suffer a lot in almost every way. But as far as his *samādhi bhāvanā* goes, if he is someone who is intent on Dhamma, he will develop and gain more by the practice of *"rukkhamūla"*. Because in all

postures and movements he will act in the manner of one who is striving, excepting only when he sleeps.

The force of the fear of danger drives him to be watchful and careful and to maintain mindfulness, which he dare not allow to depart from the heart. This is undoubtedly of great value in helping him to make that effort which can cause the *citta* to develop in *samādhi* and wisdom. Therefore, for a "warrior" who is ready to face death, the *Dhutanga* of living under the shade of a tree in a desolate forest is like going into the front line of battle. Even though his *citta* has never attained calm, never known what *samādhi* and *paññā* are like, nor what the experience of the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* means, when he sets up mindfulness inwardly, in intimate contact with the heart, making an effort to guard it and prevent it slipping away, then his meditation practice will be correct, and complete with mindfulness, and regardless of which aspect of Dhamma he is using as his preparatory meditation technique *(parikamma–bhāvanā)* his meditation practice will be correct and complete with mindfulness. Likewise, when examining and questioning the true state of nature *(sabhāva–dhamma)* to see it clearly with wisdom, then true wisdom can arise when mindfulness is there to control the mind. Mindfulness is therefore an essential component of mind *(dhamma)* and is of the greatest importance in affairs, both internally and out in the world.

Those who live in desolate, lonely places, under the shade of a tree, or in similar ways, for the purpose of self-training, therefore have a much better opportunity to promote their striving in this way than have those who stay where they feel safe and secure and where they feel no anxiety at all, such as in a hut. The value of staying under the shade of a tree is to be found in the way it prevents one from relaxing into complacency and self-satisfaction. Thus it makes one mindful of oneself, which leads to the development of *samādhi samāpatti* (ability in *samādhi*) and *Magga–Phala–Nibbāna* (the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna*) in a steadily progressive manner with no wasting of time or delay, nor any doubts or hesitation due to negligence and complacency. Those who have been living *"rukkhamūla"* in desolate forests until they have become used to it are like experienced fighters in a war who have no fear of the enemy, for they can live anywhere, which is very different from those who have had little training.

Venerable Ajaan Mun used to praise the practice of staying under the shade of a tree, in a manner that left a deep impression on those who heard him and it was a topic that he often brought to mind and talked about, right up to the end of his life. He used to speak about it in such a manner as to bring all his followers to their senses and make them think about their own situation and to arouse interest in the practice of living the way of *"rukkhamūla"*. He used to say that:

"If my Bhikkhus want to know about themselves, both in regard to what is gross and subtle, and to have confidence in their own abilities, such that they know whether or not they are Bhikkhus who practise the way in full measure, they ought to go and take up the practice of *"rukkhamūla",* living under the shade of a tree in a desolate forest which is full of tigers and other wild animals to keep them alert. In addition, this will test and show to what extent they are skilled and fearless and also the extent to which they are incompetent and timid, until they know fully, in all ways, what is meant by 'living *rukkhamūla*', which was established by the Lord Buddha."

"Once one knows the fears that are inherently in one's nature, and the courage that comes from the effort one makes, which can clean them out, then *sīla, samādhi, paññā* and the higher Dhamma will increase stage by stage. They are most likely to develop in association with each other and one will know their progress in one's heart as it occurs, step by step. This is the way in which one can see the value of this *Dhutanga* practice to one's heart's contentment."

"The Lord Buddha and his *Sāvakas* all upheld the practice of this *Dhutanga* as an inherent part of their life of striving, from beginning to end, which was never given up. Because it is the dwelling place of those people who are alert and zealous — not heedless and complacent — and the striving which they did by way of the *citta* brought gains and development until they reached the end of the road, and nothing in the whole universe can compare with this. So the Lord established his teaching of *"rukkhamūla",* to act as a signpost, pointing the way. It was as if he was saying: "This is the way to go if you want to overcome all fear, and danger and get free from *dukkha.* You are all so dim, dull and sluggish and what are you going to do about it? This place, is not a dull place, unsuited to mindfulness and wisdom, but a place that arouses and revives mindfulness, wisdom and striving in all ways, so that they become mature, strong and penetrating. Come now! We, the

Tathāgata, will lead the way without hesitation. Don't go on messing about in a disorderly way, shouldering your heavy burden by thinking that you have sufficient strength and ability to continue on your own. For when you come to a critical situation with no escape you will have nothing in you to turn to. You must be quick now and search for a suitable battle field where you can gain victory, such as under the shade of a tree. There the *citta* will reach that Dhamma which is proper to the heart and void of all *kilesas* and *Dukkha* of all kinds. It was in such a place as this that the *Tathāgata* was able to gain ascendancy over all the *kilesas* so that they gave in completely. Over there is the Srī–Mahā–Bodhi Tree which is the symbol of the great victory of the *Tathāgata,* and if this is not *"rukkhamūla",* what else can you call it? Prince Siddhattha was enlightened and became the Lord Buddha at the foot of the Srī–Mahā–Bodhi Tree. But if you are still in doubt, where else will you go and search for Dhamma if not in the same kind of place as the *Tathāgata* used to search for and know it. A place such as this is sacred to those who see danger."[47]

"For where else should you go groping in delusion to search for sacred places? That which is sacred within yourselves is the most longed for holy refuge, more desirable than anything else. You must search for it until you find it, and the place to search for it is in your own hearts, while depending on and aided by a suitable place to act as the field where you dig down searching in this way."

Whatever aspect of Dhamma was revealed by Venerable Ajaan Mun, such as the foregoing example, made a deep impression, touching the hearts of those who heard it. For it was teaching that came from the true knowledge and understanding of one who was true in himself. There was no room to doubt it nor think that the way of practice to attain the Path, Fruit and *Nibbāna* should be anywhere else except in the practice of someone who does it entirely with *"Sāmīci–kamma"* (actions that are appropriate and right). This was even more so when one listened directly to Venerable Ajaan's teaching, for it was as if he drew the Path, Fruit, and *Nibbāna* out of his heart, so that his followers who were blind (mentally) could feel it, enough to make them long for it with regret before returning it to its original place. In other words, when

47. "Danger" means the ever present danger in life of sickness, suffering and death which can come at any time. And also the fear of what will then become of oneself in the future.

Venerable Ajaan Mun gave a Dhamma talk it seemed almost as though he brought it out from within him for others to see. Then as soon as he finished it was as if he put it back where it came from — in his own heart. Listening to him made us feel as if we were flying high and walking on the clouds. But once he finished we became like a lot of blind men groping for the way and unable to find it. Uncertain about this, uncertain about that; thinking that this is good and that is best. Picking up both the rice husk and the kernel. Picking up all sorts of unessential things, as well as the main essentials, which does not lead to anything valuable. They could just as well accept their fate and leave it at that.

The Dhutanga of Living at the Foot of a Tree

Venerable Ajaan Mun said, this had brought him remarkable results all the time, so he liked staying in such places and never got tired of it. When staying in a place without a roof and walls, or anything else, to protect one from danger, the *citta* is bound to be afraid and insecure. This is especially so at night, and for a timid person, whatever he sees he will believe is a tiger. So in the case of one who is very timid, he should in the daytime take note of where all the bushes are located round about where he is staying so that at night he can see them and know what they are. Otherwise the bushes in the locality where he is staying will become tigers in his imagination and they will deceive him all night so that he will hardly be able to lie down and sleep or do any meditation practice.

One who lives the way of *"rukkhamūla"* is much more careful and cautious than someone who lives in a place that is closed about, both as regards physical movements involved in his living routine and in lying down and sleeping, and also in his *samādhi* meditation practice. Consequently his *citta* is likely to go forward and progress more rapidly, despite the fact that no compulsion has been used and nobody has forced him to do this. On the contrary, it is freely undertaken by each Bhikkhu who decides to look for a way to train and discipline himself.

Sometimes, while a Bhikkhu is sitting practising *samādhi* under his mosquito net and beneath the shade of a tree *(rukkhamūla),* a tiger creeps up very slowly to have a look at him and sniff him out. Some may even come right in close to where he is staying, but once it knows that it is a human being it quickly

draws back and goes away and never comes back again. It probably creeps up close in this way to have a look because it does not know what is there, never having seen anything like this before. But there are some tigers which seem to have unusual hidden characteristics which makes them suspicious. This was shown by the experience of a Bhikkhu who was walking *caṅkama* at night without having lit a lamp. For a tiger crept up quietly until it came to within two yards of the end of the path where he was walking, where it crouched down and watched him without going away. Then this Bhikkhu heard a slight sound which he could not account for so he shone a flashlight towards it and saw this tiger which immediately leap away, but he never saw it come back again after that. In this case the animal was a large striped tiger about the size of a race horse. It was not a leopard which likes to creep up and catch and eat dogs which often like to accompany people who go into the forests.

The *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* who live in the manner of *"rukkhamūla",* go through various experiences which are fearful and frightening, of which a small number have been told here. If you can imagine yourself in the position of one of these Bhikkhus, living in the manner of *"rukkhamūla"* and experiencing these various things which happen, how would you, who are reading this, feel about it. If you could put up with it and take the discipline until it became your story, a fine and beautiful biography, it would be truly worth something — a story for future generations to hold up as an example, as a guiding principle in the heart. But for one who cannot put up with the difficulties nor accept the ascetic training, there is reason to fear that his biography will be of the type that brings discredit to himself, to his colleagues and to the religion which is the heart of all Buddhists, staining it in a way that nothing can erase for a long time. He also becomes a person who has feelings of inferiority, so the sphere of *kammaṭṭhāna* and the religion become inferior. Because they depend on oneself, who is an incompetent person, who drags all these things of incomparable value to ruin with him.

Merely using one's imagination to try it out for a moment is enough to make one realise how difficult for the body and tormenting to the mind is the way of those who strive and struggle using such methods, right from the start of the life of *Dhutanga–Kammaṭṭhāna,* until they are able to plant their roots firmly in all the forms of Dhamma, due to their determination to go this way however difficult it may be. Wherever people live, it is hard to find anyone who has enough strength of will to go this way and to make sacrifices such as

this. For most people are afraid of suffering and think only of themselves rather than of Dhamma which is the way leading to freedom from suffering.

Living without any shelter or protection against all kinds of things can be instrumental in causing someone to see that he is a person who has made renunciations in all ways and is not dependent on anything. If anything should happen to cause him to die, he is then ready to submit and let it happen as it will, following the natural course of events, without contending or opposing it with methods derived from an attitude of self-importance. If he is short of food and lacking those necessities which the world depends upon and considers to be essential, he accepts this for the sake of Dhamma. He makes no display of being oppressed and hard-done-by, nor of any vexation, in his heart — which is the way to increase suffering, making it still more overwhelming. As for the suffering and hardship which arises due to the hard work of striving, he accepts it and puts up with it because he wants to gain freedom from suffering by means of this striving. Even supposing a hungry tiger should come and bite him and carry him away to eat, he would submit and sacrifice his life to it with the attitude in his heart that: "I am a Bhikkhu who has already renounced everything completely." He has no jealously guarded attachments to hold him back from sacrificing everything for the sake of the Supreme Dhamma, and thus he lives in contentment everywhere.

Although the life as led by those who practise the way of "*rukkhamūla*" under the shade of a tree in the spirit of renunciation may have no meaning for people in general, yet it does have meaning in Dhamma — which has the greatest value. Therefore, instead of their lives and actions being meaningless as people in the world generally like to suppose and believe, they become of priceless value, but it is rare to find anyone who can make such sacrifices. The Lord Buddha saw with insight how important were the qualities of this *Dhutanga* as an effective method of subjugating the *kilesas* within the hearts of those who live in the world. Therefore, he prescribed it as the path to go along for those in this world who would follow him, to enable those who have the heart of a warrior to attain the final goal of the life of purity *(Brahmacariyā).* The purpose of this teaching is to act as a vehicle in which they can drive through the world of *saṁsāra* and be victorious in the fight so as to follow the Lord Buddha, and catch up with him quickly, without having to wait about for a long time. For this article of Dhamma acts as a spur to those who practise, so that they become resolute and determined in their aim of reaching the realm of freedom from discontent *(dukkha).* There is no doubt that this can be done

by depending on all those things in the surrounding environment to act as a spur to foster and keep them striving in a steady and regular manner until they manage to reach the goal without meeting any obstacles.

The foregoing is enough to act as a brief explanation of the way for those Bhikkhus who are interested and who may like to make a comparison between themselves and these forest Bhikkhus, for both groups are anxious to develop themselves in the way of Dhamma. It may also show them enough of how they should practise so as to have a way that would enable them to escape (from *dukkha*) safely and properly, without sitting about just waiting for *dukkha* — much or little — to come from the activities of the *citta*. For the *citta* is the leader, the one that has a habitual liking for things which have frequently come within its orbit.

This Dhamma–truth is so important that it would not be out of place to call it the heart or the first principle of *Kammaṭṭhāna,* because nearly all the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who truly aim for the meaning and Dhamma like to practise this article of Dhamma. I who write this do not know much and I am not at all clever, yet I have a heart and I cannot help liking this article of Dhamma. It is just that, in reaching for it I don't get it, so I unashamedly admit my situation.

The Dhutanga of Going on Almsround

Piṇḍapāta[48] is an essential duty for those Bhikkhus who are ordained as sons of the Sākya in the Buddha's *Sangha (Sākyaputta Buddhajinarasa).* This is evident in Buddhism as being one of its most obvious features and it is generally considered by the Bhikkhus that *piṇḍapāta* is an important part of their lives. This may be seen in the instructions *(anusāsana)* given to all Bhikkhus after the ordination procedure, when they are taught both about dwelling under a tree *(rukkhamūla–senāsana)* and about *piṇḍapāta,* and they are considered important enough to be repeated again after every ordination. The Lord Buddha set his heart on these two practices and always considered them to be important duties which he kept up until the day of his *Parinibbāna.* The only exceptions to this were those occasions when it became impracticable for him to do so, as for example, the time when he spent the *vassa* (rainy season) in the Lelayika forest with the elephant Pālileyyaka. Because there were no people living in that area who could give him food if he went on *piṇḍapāta.*

48. *Piṇḍapāta:* see footnote 20 on page 16.

The regular routine of *piṇḍapāta* is a duty which gives peace and happiness of heart to those who practise it. This means, firstly, that when one is walking in those places where there are houses and where people live together, and also when one is going to and coming from such places, one is striving for one's own development within oneself all the time which is the same sort of thing as walking *caṅkama* at the place where one is staying. Secondly, it is a change of bodily posture and activity for the time while one is going *piṇḍapāta.* Thirdly, for those who are in the process of developing wisdom all the time, while walking on *piṇḍapāta,* they may at times see or hear various things that are passing by and which enter and stimulate the doors of their senses. These are things which can promote wisdom and which they can take hold of and often gain value from. Fourthly, to overcome laziness — which is an inherent characteristic of human beings who only like to get results but are lazy about doing those causal actions without which the results will not come. Fifthly, to overcome conceit — which makes one believe that one is a high and important person whose family is long established in the upper classes, wealthy and opulent in all ways. So one dislikes the way of *piṇḍapāta* which virtually turns one into a beggar.

Whatever one gets from *piṇḍapāta* one may eat and it is enough to keep one going, but not so much as would makes one's body increase in strength and vigour so that it acts as an enemy to one's heart's striving for Dhamma, making it difficult to progress.

In eating once a day one should take sufficient, but not too much so that one's stomach is disturbed and one gets indigestion because one has exceeded the natural capacity of one's digestive system. But generally speaking, fasting and hunger are considered to be normal for all those who probe into Dhamma for the purpose of ending *dukkha* and leaving none remaining. In addition to eating only once a day one should also examine and consider which types of food are of value to one's body, not causing any stomach trouble, as well as being of value to the *citta,* so that one's meditation practice *(bhāvanā)* goes smoothly and the *citta* is not tarnished due to the wrong type of food causing damage to it. For instance, foods that are too hot and spicy or too salty which cause heart-burn, making one feel anxious are no help to one's striving for Dhamma. For body and mind (heart) are closely interrelated and can quickly react on each other. So it is taught that one should choose those foods that are beneficial *(sappāya)* and of value to both body and mind — if one is in a position to choose. But if one has no choice and one knows that the food

before one is not beneficial, then it is better not to eat any of it at all. For if one were then to persist in eating, it would only do harm to the body and cause *dukkha* and anxiety to the mind. But those who eat only once a day are likely to be well aware of themselves so that they are not carried away by the tastes of various foods.

Whether the Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu does the practice of dwelling under the shade of a tree (rukkhamūla), goes for piṇḍapāta as a regular duty, or eats food only once a day as a regular practice, all of these are just his methods of training and putting pressure on the kilesas which cause the citta to be restless and unstable. Thereby their strength is reduced so that they are not bold and spirited enough to go wild like a stubborn horse which bolts away from the battle ground. So the value which is derived from these *Dhutanga*s lies in the way in which they make the body and heart light and buoyant so that they are made easier than usual to train. The body does not then have so much vitality that it can be a heavy load on the *citta*, as when one lets it eat as much as it wants, as well as taking snacks and nibbling a bit here, a bit there all the time, which is being excessively self-indulgent. This is very different from the ways of the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who learn and train themselves to know what is reasonable and moderate in everything which they associate with.

The Dhutanga of Eating From the Almsbowl

This is the *Dhutanga* of eating from a single vessel, which means that one eats all the food out of the bowl, where it is all grouped together in one place. Both savouries and sweets are all together in the one bowl, and not divided up in separate containers outside the bowl. For this would tend to promote greed and excess which contradicts the essence of the *Dhutanga Bhikkhu* who has set himself to live and be contented with little. This is right and appropriate for him, for he is not then cluttered up with all the preparations for eating, for sitting, for sleeping and so on.

The value which the Bhikkhus gain from eating out of the bowl can be great, depending on the strength of each one's mindfulness and wisdom to probe and search and draw out this value for his own use. There are also three levels of practising this *Dhutanga*, these being, the lowest, the moderate and the most excellent levels. For the lowest level, although all the food is put into the bowl, it is divided up and arranged so that the different types are

separated so that for example, the rice and savouries are in one area and the sweets in another. Or, they may be separated by a suitable item of food, such as a banana which prevents them from mixing. For the moderate level, all the food is put in the bowl in the same way, but it is only separated to the extent that each item of food remains intact and is not actually mixed together. For the most excellent level, all the food whether sweet or savoury is all mixed together and none of it is kept separate at all.

Before putting his hand into the bowl to take the food to eat, the Bhikkhu should reflect upon it (*paccavekkhana*) thus: *Paṭisaṅkhā yoniso piṇḍapātaṁ paṭisevāmi...,*[49] which is a skilful way to consider all this food gathered together there in one bowl. He should do this with whatever strength of wisdom he may have for at least one minute, because the good which comes from this reflection when done properly is hidden in the food all mixed together, in a recondite way. In addition, the day will then come when one sees the craving *(taṇhā)* which has been hiding behind one's hunger in a manner which one would never have suspected. For in the teaching of Buddhism, the hunger which arises from the body and mind *(dhātu–khandha)* is not normally considered to be craving. But that hunger which is in fact craving and which waits to creep into the body and mind whenever they are hungry, is very secretive and evasive, and it is difficult to see and lay hold of it. Because it keeps covering its tracks and infuses into the hunger which is in fact there in the body and mind. Then one has little interest in whether the hunger of body and mind has invisible *kilesas* hidden within it or not.

The investigation, or recollection which one does before eating, or continually while one is eating is thus a way of finding out about those *kilesas* which are hidden in hunger. It also enables one to see the value of the recollection — *"Paṭisaṅkhā yoniso piṇḍapātaṁ paṭisevāmi...,"* and how it is a most efficient weapon for destroying these hidden *kilesas.* Then whatever other duties or business one may have to do, externally or internally, one will not forget this article of Dhamma, so that eventually one becomes a person who always has it in his heart in all situations.

I have not gone very far in exploring the various aspects of this *Dhutanga,* both as regards the types of food and the methods of recollection because it would become too involved.

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49. See footnote 21 on page 16.

The Dhutanga of Wearing Robes Made From Discarded Cloth

The observance of using only *paṁsukūla*[50] cloth is the way to diminish the *kilesas* concerned with worldly ambition and the desire for beauty and attractiveness. These *kilesas* are looked upon as odious and pretentious by those who are the wisest of men, whereas all the average foolish people of the world look on them with pride and satisfaction, and forget themselves in them. But the *Dhutanga Bhikkhu* who wants internal beauty, which means a clean and clear heart, must oppose these *kilesas* which want beauty and attractiveness to make them feel as if they could fly up and walk on the clouds. So he must go about looking for *paṁsukūla* cloth which has been discarded in the charnel ground, or on the garbage heap and take them and wash them and sew them up piece by piece to make a *sabong, cīvara* or *saṅghāṭi,*[51] and use them as mere coverage for his body so that he may develop the *Samaṇa–Dhamma.*[52] Then he may follow the *"Samaṇa"* traditions without any concerns or worries and he does not think with emotional attachment which is anxiously bound up with anybody or anything, excepting only that form of Dhamma which he is presently working on and delving into.

In former times, the *paṁsukūla* cloth was truly valueless, such as the shroud wrapping a corpse and bits of cloth thrown away on the roadside. It was not just a length of cloth which is called *"paṁsukūla"* cloth that the lay followers give with faith, as is done in our country nowadays. Those who are able to go and find the true *paṁsukūla* cloth must be Bhikkhus who have decided to renounce the popularly accepted way of the world and have turned their hearts towards acquiring virtue as their wealth, as well as establishing their aim and purpose in the direction of Dhamma. This in effect, means that they have entirely devoted and dedicated themselves and their lives and turned themselves into slaves of the Buddha, Dhamma and the *Sangha,* completely devoted and fully committed to them.

In throwing away all that which most people look on as valuable as well as the popular approval of society, instead of becoming a worthless person and a social outcast, as most people would think, their hearts grow in value

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50. Cloth (rags) that have been discarded as worthless.

51. These are the Bhikkhu's three robes. The skirt (*sabong*), the main robe (*cīvara*) and the outer robe (*saṅghāṭi*) which is a double layer of cloth.

52. The Dhamma of a recluse. The *Samaṇa* tradition is the way of the forest dwelling recluses. The Buddha is often called the *Samaṇa* Gotama.

in a wonderful way, almost beyond belief. Thus it was in the case of the Lord Buddha, for when he left home, renounced all the wealth of royalty and ordained as an ascetic, he had become worthless in the eyes of the world and society in those days. But the result which came from this was far beyond what anyone could have guessed, for he became the supreme teacher to the three worlds right up to the present day. That this *Dhutanga* observance is a way of continually reminding and teaching Bhikkhus to behave like discarded bits of cloth, has the same purpose as the former *Dhutanga*s in that it is also for the purpose of promoting the value of the *citta*.

The Dhutanga of Living in the Forest

The observance of living in the forest is a tradition of those *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who practise the way following in line from Venerable Ajaan Mun, who considered it to be the most important of all the *Dhutanga* observances.

The *Dhutanga* practices which they practised much and regularly included: *1) Living in the forest, 2) Living under the shade of a tree (rukkhamūla), 3) Going for piṇḍapāta regularly, 4) Eating food only once a day, 5) Eating out of the bowl, 6) Wearing paṁsukūla robes.* (But not refusing the robes which lay followers give with faith. Although Venerable Ajaan Mun never wore any other robes which he was given, right up to the end of his life. But there were very few of his followers who took up this practice after him), 7*) Living in a cemetery or charnel ground, 8) Maintaining a sitting position (nesajja);* in other words, not lying down for as many nights as one has resolved to remain sitting, *9) Not accepting any food which is offered after one has returned from piṇḍapāta.*[53]

The Bhikkhus who follow in line from Venerable Ajaan Mun have a great liking for all these practices. As for the remainder of the *Dhutanga*s, some practise them at times also, but we shall not discuss them here because they have already been explained to some extent in the biography of Venerable Ajaan Mun. Any readers who want to know more about them should consult the section dealing with the thirteen *Dhutanga*s in the "*Dhamma Vibhaga*

53. The remaining *Dhutanga* practices, which are not specifically mentioned here, are:

a) Wearing only the three robes.

b) Not omitting any house when going on *piṇḍapāta*.

c) Living in the open air.

d) Being satisfied with any dwelling.

Pariccheda".[54] But here, any further explanations of the *Dhutanga*s will only be in connection with the practices of each of the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus,* which will shortly be described. Although the *Dhutanga*s which those who followed in line from Venerable Ajaan Mun, liked to practise all the time are the ones which have been listed above. The fourteen "*Khandha–vatta*"[55] will also not be explained here, for they can be found easily in many books, such as the second volume of the "*Vinaya–mukha*".[56] If the reader wishes to know about them, he should have recourse to the available literature.

The *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* always practise in the general way of the thirteen *Dhutanga*s and the fourteen *Khandha–vatta.* Even if they deviate from them in some details they still keep within the basic principles of them as described above, without going off course to practise other things. But the things that they practise and what happens in their experiences do differ to some extent in unusual ways in each case, depending on their individual differences of character.

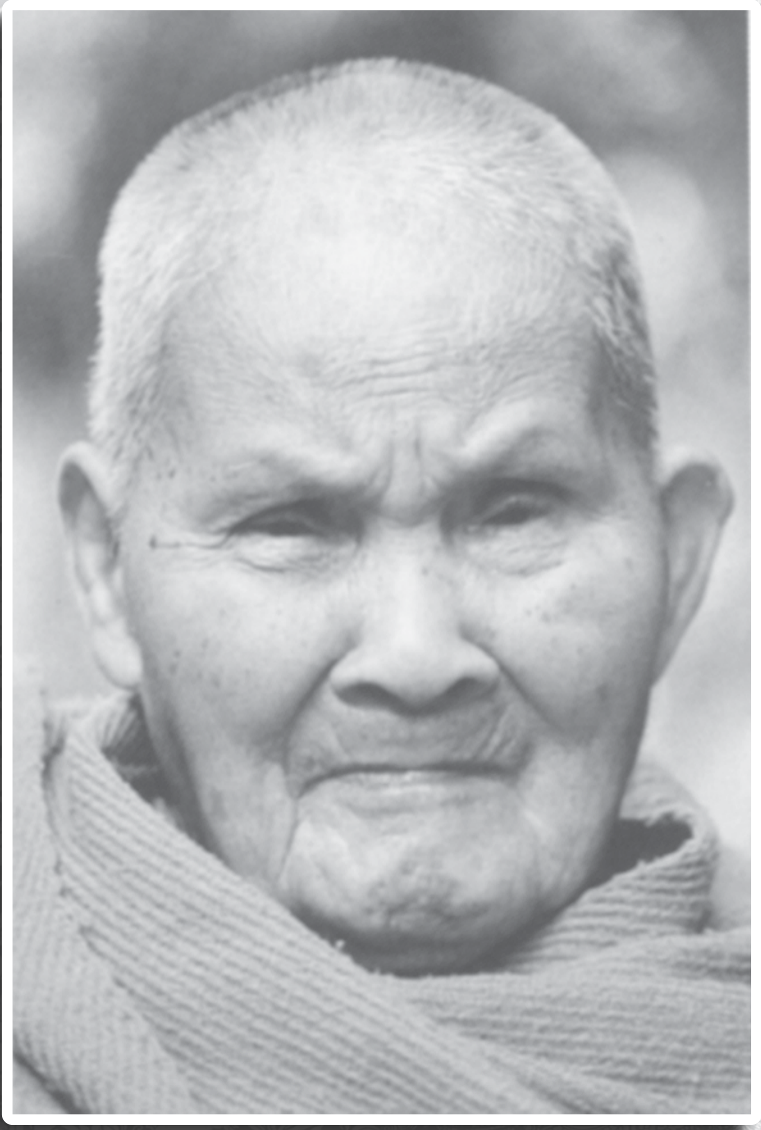
Generally speaking, those Bhikkhus who habitually like to live deep in the forest and hills are more likely to have strange experiences than those who live in the more readily accessible forests. So it was with Venerable Ajaan Mun, who was the founder of this particular line of *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* for his inclination was always to like living in the forests, caves and hills, and he used to like teaching the Bhikkhus to make them more interested in living in the forests and hills rather than the more usual places that people live in. So those Bhikkhus who liked living in these desolate forests often had many unusual experiences and things which happened, such as were associated with ghosts, *Devatā, Indra, Brahma, Nāgas,* tigers and other animals. On occasions they were also visited by the *Sāvaka Arahants* who came to give some teaching.



54. An explanation of them is given in the English translation of '*The Visuddhimagga*' (*'The Path of Purification'*).

55. See Appendix on page 569.

56. See Appendix on page 569.



Venerable Ajaan Chob

7

The Story of Venerable Ajaan Chob

At this point I shall relate the story of Ajaan Chob, an elder disciple of Venerable Ajaan Mun who had many experiences of a similar nature to those of Venerable Ajaan. When you who read this and have thought about his experiences and what the truth of them is, from your viewpoint, which is that of a reader reading about the experiences of someone else that are not your own experiences, you should consider how you will think and feel about it when the time comes for you to experience such things yourself — if you attain the ability to do so. This should be kept in mind constantly while reading the following.

This Thera, who is still alive today,[57] has a natural tendency to like wandering in the forests and hills, but he dislikes any involvement with other Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras.* For he sees the value in living alone, deep in the forests and hills, both for himself and for other beings whose nature is subtle and mysterious, such as the *Devaputta, Devatā, Indra, Brahma,* ghosts, *Nāgas, Asurakāya* and so on. The beings in these realms of existence are hidden from the sight of human beings, so it seems as if they have no meaning and no existence in the world of people and in the "three worlds" of existence at all.

These unusual beings begged the Thera to consider them, saying that they have belief in good and bad *kamma,* in merit and demerit, in the hells, the heavens and *Nibbāna,* in the same way as human beings who also believe in these things. But they have no way to show themselves and what they understand so as to let the world know about themselves in an open, self-evident manner like others who live in the world. Only rarely do they meet a person who is "long sighted" — meaning one who has special means of knowing which is not prejudiced or biased in the totality of what exists — who comes and acknowledges them once in a while. They said that:

> "None of these beings like becoming involved with human beings — men and women — who are gross in body and mind and whose minds have

57. Venerable Ajaan Chob has died since this was written and there is no further need to avoid revealing his identity.

aggression hidden within them which gives no confidence and freedom from fear to others living together with them in the world. Excepting only those who have a moral nature *(Sīla–Dhamma)* in their hearts, for even though their bodies are gross, this is just the way of nature for those who are subject to the laws of *kamma* to which all must submit. For these, none of the *Devatā*s hold any objection or dislike, but such people are very rare and difficult to find and to meet, although they are able to give peace to us because of their virtue which they also impart to others in various ways. But they are not able to know about and make contact with us directly and the only link between us is virtue."

"People of this kind bring widespread peace to the world, both directly and indirectly, and in ways that are manifestly apparent or hidden, and not restricted to place or time and are boundless. Even amongst the ghosts, those whose *kamma* is sufficiently mild also get peace from people of this kind who always give and share out their merit and virtue, and those who have *Deva* bodies always rejoice *(anumodanā)* with them. May they have prosperity and long life, and long may they continue to help the world before they give it up to go and enjoy their own valuable and subtle wealth."

"But in your own case Venerable Sir, you are a special person in that you are complete with moral behaviour, replete with Dhamma and your heart is bright with knowing and with the virtue of Dhamma, which is worthy of the highest praise and faith. All of us ask and invite you to stay here to bless us by your presence for a long time, and so as to help with your compassion those beings in the world who are unfortunate, in so far as their state of being and level of existence is concerned as understood from the viewpoint of people in the world. Then we could all come and listen to your teaching to increase our "pure merit" *(puññā–pāramī)* greatly and also to act as a condition or cause leading to the "Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna*," which is the highest Dhamma in this kind of world."

The Venerable Ajaan said that while he was staying far away in the mountains, those who generally made contact with him ranged from the *Devas* living nearby or far away and in the higher or lower realms to *Nāgas* and ghosts of all kinds and there was hardly a single night that they did not come. But he was also able to do his own practice for Dhamma at suitable times and regularly. In finding time for resting the body there was no difficulty and he was able to keep on receiving his mysterious guests without ceasing. Both by day and

night he hardly had any spare time with nothing to do, yet everything went more smoothly than usual. Much more so than would be the case in living with a lot of people, Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras,* when it is hardly possible to get any peace while in contact with them. But having association with those living in the realms of the *Devas* at all levels, regardless of however many came the effect was as though nobody was there at all, and in presenting Dhamma to them it came entirely from the heart without any need to use any physical energy for communication. In fact, while presenting Dhamma to them it seemed, in respect to what one feels, that the body was not there at all, for there was just "knowing" and Dhamma meeting together and coming out. Meanwhile, feelings of tiredness never arose while presenting Dhamma for those beings to hear.

As soon as the Ajaan finished teaching them, it seemed that these beings were all smiling, bright and cheerful and all of them simultaneously said *"Sādhu"* three times, and the sound of it echoed through all the realms *(loka–dhātu).* Venerable Ajaan Mun used to tell us of some of his experiences which were almost identically the same.

When there was a Dhamma discussion their aim was to gain true knowledge and understanding. In the same way as someone going along a road where they had never been before may fear that they were going the wrong way and would ask with concerned interest whether they were on the right road. Some of them would converse using the usual "language of the heart", but others would talk using the *Pāli* language which was the language of the Buddha. But the Ajaan understood the meaning of the *Pāli* they used which had one and the same meaning as the "language of the heart".

The Venerable Ajaan said that when he had withdrawn from *samādhi* he tried to write notes of the many questions in *Pāli* which the *Devatās* often asked. While Venerable Ajaan Mun was still alive, he would go and ask him the meaning of those questions. But Venerable Ajaan Mun said:

> "Although *Pāli* words as used everywhere in the world have specific meanings, those which arise spontaneously within one and those which the *Devatās* use in asking questions are words used in a special way, only applicable to the people concerned at that time and place. It would probably be quite unsuitable to relate what was said to the world in general. For even though the meaning may make good sense and be quite clear when translated from *Pāli* as used in the world, the *Pāli* which arises spontaneously

in a specific individual to express what he intends, has a meaning which relates only to that individual and is not generally applicable elsewhere. So even if I were to translate this to you, it may not correspond to the meaning which you understand from those same *Pāli* words, and I do not want to translate them. Because words which arise from the heart, whether *Pāli* or the "language of the heart", and whether giving a warning or advise or whatever else, are only likely to be understood and to give their meaning with certainty to that person alone. Others could only analyse the words which were intended for that person, and this would distort the meaning of the Dhamma which was spoken just for that person."

"I understand well enough about the Dhamma which is spoken and arises spontaneously within one, both that which is for myself as well as that which is for the *Devaputtas, Devatā* and for all the others who are capable of making contact. For these "Dhammas" have been arising within me continually, and in fact, if I were to say that they constantly arise as the complement of the practice of *samādhi bhāvanā,* it would not be wrong. But "Dhammas" such as these can also arise at other times. Sometimes they arise while walking *caṅkama,* while just sitting down normally, while walking for *piṇḍapāta,* while eating food, and while talking with friends and associates. When one stops they arise, and also when pausing just for a moment while presenting Dhamma they arise. They arise without any regard for time, place or situation, but to say they come from my character does not seem right to me, because when I first started to practise and was still floundering about I never saw any of these Dhammas arise. They only began to arise when my practice had developed to the point where I knew a little bit about it. From then until my *citta* had developed *samādhi* and wisdom, right up to the present, these Dhammas gradually became a constant companion as the *citta* became stronger."

"Nowadays these Dhammas keep arising all the time, endlessly, without any special conditions, such as the need to be in a special situation or place. For they arise in any situation, any place as they will, and in general I consider them as private and personal Dhammas, to be understood just by myself. I never think of asking anyone to translate them to me, except when I want to know the meaning from someone who is able to translate Dhamma sayings such as this, so as to compare it with my own understanding. So I sometimes ask someone about such things. Not because I haven't understood the meaning of that saying of Dhamma and want to know what

it means, for I fully understand everything that is Dhamma both within others and myself."

"Therefore I do not want to translate this for you, for even though I am your *Ācariya,* the essential meaning which you should know and understand from this Dhamma which spoke up within you is something which has more value than any translation of mine."

"He never did translate it," said Venerable Ajaan Chob. "But in fact I never really had any doubts about it, and what Venerable Ajaan said was absolutely true and I had to agree with everything."

The Devatās Visit Him to Hear Dhamma

Venerable Ajaan Chob said that the *Devatās* would come and listen to his Dhamma. At times many came and at other times few, but in general there were not so many as came to visit Venerable Ajaan Mun. Sometimes between fifty and sixty came, sometimes from one to six hundred and on rare occasions there were thousands.

"The clothes which the *Devatās* wore, whether from the upper or the lower realms, would all be the same, sometimes white sometimes red but none of them would be obtrusive. None of them ever had on any jewels, decorations or make-up, whatever group they were and however often they came. For when they came to visit a Bhikkhu who was possessed of Virtue and Dhamma which all of them venerated highly and had faith in, their leader would let it be known that none of them should wear any decorations or make-up while visiting the Bhikkhu, and their dress should be appropriate and correct, in the manner of the Buddhist lay devotees. Their manners and behaviour were beautifully graceful, impressive to see and captivating to the heart, and having seen them one never felt bored and uninterested. It is an example which we human beings would do well to adopt when visiting a Bhikkhu or the *Sangha* in a monastery or elsewhere so as to give an appearance of seemliness, which does not cause offence or revulsion such that having seen it one feels a disgust which one cannot easily shake off."

"But who is capable of telling people about the *Devaputtas* and *Devatās,* so that they would believe it enough to learn and to take them as an example to

be followed and practised? Who is bold enough to undertake this task? For as soon as they hear anyone talking about *Devatās, Pretas* and ghosts, whether in fun or seriously, they just laugh at him. As for anyone suggesting that the world of human beings should take up the standards of social behaviour of the *Deva* worlds, they would say he was mad, deranged. Even a mental institution would hardly accept him for treatment, so don't you think he would just die worthlessly while still being infected by madness?"

After the Elder had finished, we both laughed and paused for a short while. Then I could not resist the impulse to sound out the Elder, half seriously, half in fun, saying:

"I think the Venerable Ajaan should himself be the one to introduce people to the etiquette of the *Devatās,* because you have actually seen them yourself so why should they say that you are mad? People in the world, when they go abroad and see things in various foreign countries, talk about them after they return home, and they introduce some things from abroad to improve things and solve problems in their homes and towns. Thus they introduce regulations and customs for people in our country to follow. For instance, in Thailand the styles of dress and clothing have almost completely changed into those as used in other countries, both for men and women, young and old. For our Thai people are easy to teach, not being stubborn and inflexible like in some other countries. For the more styles of dress and decoration they have, the more they like it, and they make copies of other peoples styles as well as, or better than the originals. They also have the most wonderful memories for anything which they see or hear that is strange and fascinating. Now when we think of the dress styles in the realms of the *Devas* which none of them have ever seen, not even those who go flying about in space, there is no doubt that they would grasp at them and admire these *Deva* styles as soon as they were displayed to the world. If people were shown the way I think that there would be many who should be interested, because this is the style of the upper classes."

After I had finished saying this we both had a good laugh. Then the Venerable Elder replied saying:

"What you say is, as usual, too extravagant. If I was to do as you say I would not be able to live in Thailand for certain. I would surely have to be

exiled amongst the *Pretas* and ghosts. Because people would accuse me of being one of them and they would drive me out to live with the *Pretas* and ghosts for sure. As for sending me to live amongst the *Devas* and *Brahmas,* there is no hope of this because their status is very exalted and respectable. But it is to the realms of the *Pretas* and ghosts that they would exile me, because their status is low and inferior, which nobody wants to pay respect to. If this were to happen, what would you say then?"

Again, we had a good laugh, and the Venerable Ajaan went on speaking:

"Please don't ever suggest that I should introduce the manners and customs of the *Devas* and *Brahma*s to people in this world. For people still respect the *Sāsana* and the Lord Buddha and hold them in the highest regard and the Dhamma which we have discussed is to be found within them. So if anyone is interested enough to practise this way, there is nothing lacking in all the teachings of Dhamma which are available to people — unless, that is, one is too stupid. But that which I told you about was for you alone and I did not think of it as being for other people. Then as soon as I tell you of these things that happened you immediately ask me to teach the ways and customs of the *Devatās* to people in general. It would be the greatest misfortune for anyone who starts to think of teaching these subtle ways and manners to the world. I couldn't do it, in fact I shouldn't even think about it."

"I merely suggested it on the spur of the moment," I replied. "If you don't like it you should not force yourself to do it."

We talked together in a relaxed intimate way as Bhikkhus who are alone and have complete confidence in each other.

Many groups of Devatās who came to visit him on various occasions had preferences for different aspects of Dhamma. Some liked to be given the moral precepts *(sīla)* before listening to Dhamma, some wanted to listen to Dhamma straight away, some liked the higher and some the lower *Saṁyojana Dhammas,*[58] but most preferred the lower group. Some liked to hear the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta,*[59] others the *Karaṇīyamettā Sutta,* and yet others

58. See Appendix on page 569.

59. This is the first discourse of the Buddha after he had attained Enlightenment.

preferred to listen to the *Sangaha–Dhamma* which is concerned with helping each other.

He said that they variously had their own peculiar preferences, each being different but they followed the wishes of the majority when many of them came. They variously liked listening to Dhamma in accordance with their tendencies of character, much as some people do. Some liked to hear about *mettā* and the *Brahmavihāras,*[60] others liked to hear some *suttas* which I had never heard of before and I could only tell them that I didn't know anything about these *suttas.* So they asked to hear another *sutta* which they liked.

He said that the *Devatās* loved and respected him very much and did not want him to go elsewhere. They wanted him to stay a long time with them, for they told him that while he stayed there their hearts were very peaceful. At night they would hear the sound of his chanting and developing the Dhamma of *mettā,* and they were deeply affected by the Dhamma which he chanted a great deal, so that they did not want him to stop. He said that in doing this chanting he only did it mentally and did not do it out loud such that anyone could hear it. But when the *Devatās* came to visit him they would ask him to chant various special *suttas* which made them feel happy and which they enjoyed listening to more than any other *suttas.* While he was chanting they listened intently and completely absorbed. He asked them: "How do you know when I am chanting these *suttas?*" They immediately answered saying that:

> "The sound of your chanting reverberates through all the worlds and how could we not hear it?"

Dhamma is very subtle and refined, and when it is brought out and proclaimed by chanting or recitation it is bound to resonate throughout the worlds to let everyone hear it who is able to hear it in the whole *Loka–dhātu.*

An Arahant Comes to Reveal Dhamma

The *Ācariya* was staying in a cave and late at night while it was very quiet and he was practising *samādhi bhāvanā* an *Arahant* whose name was Venerable Bhākula who was tall, light complexioned, beautiful and such as would inspire faith in those who saw him, used to come through the air to visit him by the way of *samādhi bhāvanā.*

60. The four *Brahmavihāras* are: *Mettā* — friendliness, love; *Karunā* — compassion; *Muditā* — sympathetic joy; *Upekkhā* — equanimity.

One day the *Ācariya* had lost something and had been quite unable to find it. That evening, as soon as he had sat to do his meditation practice the *Arahant* came through the air to visit him. As soon as he had descended and sat down he immediately said:

> "I believe you lost something of yours earlier in the day, is this not so?"

The *Ācariya* said that it was so. The *Arahant* then pointed and said:

> "It is over there, it's not lost, you just forgot where you put it."

The next morning he went and had a look and found the article where the *Arahant* had indicated. The *Ācariya* was quite surprised at this, for he had not made a plea for help nor said anything about it at all:

> "So how did the *Arahant* know about it, for I found it in the exact spot that he had indicated, which is remarkable!"

While visiting the *Ācariya,* the *Arahant* expressed his admiration for the way in which he kept up the *Dhutanga* observances, and he praised him highly for his behaviour and practice which were good and true and it was this that inspired him to come and visit the *Ācariya.*

Then the *Arahant* taught and revealed Dhamma to arouse joyfulness in the *Ācariya,* and he taught him to be firm and unrelenting in the maintenance of the *Dhutanga* observances. He said:

> "You must always keep up your practice of the *Dhutangas* so that they become firm and strong, and you must never let them deteriorate. The deterioration of the practice of the *Dhutangas* is equal to the deterioration of the religion *(Sāsana).* For even though all the books of Dhamma may still be available, they are not likely to be of real value to people who are not able to become interested in them in the way they should. The *Dhutanga* duties are very high forms of Dhamma and anyone who is able to stick to the practice of them is bound to have an exalted *citta* (heart)."
>
> "You should know that: *all the noble Ariya of all classes originated from these Dhutanga duties because all of them are methods of Dhamma which can destroy all the various types of kilesas.* Thus it is that the *Dhutanga* duties are the path to go

along for the *Ariya–Dhamma* and the *Ariya*–person *(puggala).* But those who keep no *Dhutanga* observances, in fact keep no practical observances at all. They are like an empty village, an empty town, which however fine it may be is not attractive when it is empty. So you must keep up the *Dhutangas,* the destroyers of the *kilesas.* You must always look after them and make them good and strong. Don't let the story of your life be vain and barren so that it becomes a channel for the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* to leak out and trickle away. For the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* are what you should reach and attain."

"All the Buddhas and *Sāvakas* and all others who have reached the final excellence, maintained and upheld the *Dhutanga* observances. But those who are careless and think that they are unimportant lose that which is essential and important within them. So you must always guard that which is important within you by means of the *Dhutanga* observances. One who is possessed of the *Dhutanga* observances has a strange, subtle power and authority, both outwardly and inwardly, of a kind which is quite charming and hard to explain. Such a person stands out in all the *Deva* realms throughout the universe and both people and *Devatās* of all classes praise and respect one who is endowed with the *Dhutanga* observances, and he never causes any harm either to himself or others wherever he goes, for he is always peaceful and calm in himself."

"The *Dhutanga* duties are subtle Dhammas and it is difficult to appreciate their importance even though they have always been important Dhammas in Buddhism right from the beginning. For the *Dhutanga* observances are a major principle of Buddhism; and those who have the *Dhutangas* as inherent characteristics within them, who know what is important within them and who guard well that set of conditions which is within themselves which is important, are worthy of our heartfelt admiration and praise."

"Those who are well possessed of the *Dhutanga* observances will have hearts full of *mettā* and kindness for all beings, and while there are still people who practise and maintain the *Dhutanga* observances, Buddhism will still be flourishing and giving results in that place. Because the *Dhutangas* are the way of bringing the Path (*Magga*) and Fruition *(Phala)* of all levels flowing towards them and there is no place, time or anything else that can act as an obstacle barring the way to the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* as long as the *Dhutanga* observances are kept up by all who practise the way."

> "You should take good note of all this concerning the *Dhutanga* observances so that it gets into your heart, and think about it and contemplate it so that it reaches Dhamma. Then wherever you stay, wherever you go, peace and happiness will be with you in yourself, for these *Dhutanga* observances are the source from which all Dhamma arises."

As soon as he had finished this *Arahant* said farewell to the *Ācariya* and then flew into the air and disappeared. After the visitor had gone, the *Ācariya* thought over and thoroughly examined what the *Arahant* had revealed and taught him. He became overwhelmed with wonder, for he had never even dreamed that an exalted *Arahant* who had reached *Nibbāna* already should make a special effort and come with *mettā* to teach him about the *Dhutanga* observances and many other aspects of Dhamma. He became very confident in all aspects of Dhamma and felt sure that he had not wasted the opportunity of being born as a human being, and he was full of praise for the supremely wise being who had come with *mettā* to teach him. For it was one of the *"Khīnāsava"*[61]who came through the air to him.

> "I have probably got some *vāsanā pāramī* (accumulated tendencies of perfection) which enable me to see things which are normally not visible, and to hear things which were completely unexpected, things which I never even dreamed I would hear or see since the day I was born. My practice of the way is probably not worthless in the sphere of Buddhism, for otherwise why should an exalted *Arahant* waste his time coming here through the air to favour me with *mettā?*"

Later that night when he had come out of the place where he had been doing his meditation practice to walk *caṅkama,* he felt as if his body would float up into the sky until he could follow the way the *Arahant* went. In striving to practise the way he did not feel tired nor stiff and sore anywhere and it seemed as if the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* had come within arms reach, even though in fact there were still *kilesas* in his heart. His *citta* was calm and peaceful, his body was light, and wherever he looked everything appeared free from danger, clear and open. It seemed that nowhere were there any things or emotionally disturbing objects coming into association with the heart and

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61. *Khīnāsava:* An epithet for the *Arahant,* meaning "destroyed cankers" as it is usually translated; but etymologically it means "destroyed outflows" which means the flowing out of the *citta* into the world and *saṁsāra.*

getting entangled with it, to disturb it and make trouble for it, always acting as a demonic influence *(Māra)* as they had always done in the past.

He went on walking *caṅkama* until the dawn came, without feeling in the least tired or stiff. He told me that a Dhamma saying which he had known before: *"Dhammapīti sukhaṁ seti"* — one who has joyful enthusiasm *(pīti)* in Dhamma lives and sleeps happily — occurred to him and became absolutely clear and obvious to him that night.

On hearing this the writer felt as if his hair stood on end due to joyful enthusiasm and being so glad in hearing of the experiences of the Venerable Ajaan who had the *vāsanā pāramī* to develop the way of Dhamma until he saw the Path and the Fruition right there before him. For outwardly a supreme *Arahant* flew down to favour him with *mettā* and inwardly he "drank" of the Dhamma, the taste of which seemed to spread throughout the body and heart, the taste of a rare and indescribable peacefulness. Such as this cannot be found anywhere in the world, in the sky, far, near or anywhere else except only in the effort and striving to practise and train oneself in the way of Dhamma. But those who really try and strive in this way are likely to gain such experience one day, because that which brings about such experiences are within Dhamma, and Dhamma is in the heart and is never separated from it nor ever goes to stay elsewhere.

It seems probable that this Ācariya will have the strangest biography of all Venerable Ajaan Mun's disciples, for he encountered so many unusual things. Most of them involved hardship, difficulties and lack of normal requisites, as well as encounters with wild animals and tigers which meant putting his life at risk — life which the world cherishes and looks after more than anything else! The results which came from this were like jewels decorating and enriching the heart both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly, means that he saw and heard mysterious, subtle things which were beyond the capacity of the ordinary person to know, see and hear. For he continually saw such things which went hand in hand with his practice of Dhamma right from the beginning. Whereas inwardly, means that the "taste" of Dhamma was always present in the heart.

Going on from here, the reader will be able to use his imagination in following the stories of this *Ācariya* which we will continue to relate.

The Venerable Ajaan was striving for the way of Dhamma while living in a cave in a hillside, and it seems that he was staying much farther from any village than he ever had in the past. It took him more than two hours to walk on *piṇḍapāta* every day, and return, and by the time he got back he was covered with sweat. But he was quite contented to do this and he willingly accepted the conditions without any thought of the difficulties and lack of amenities, for his meditation practice was absorbing and never boring and insipid. Then one night, not long after his *citta* became calm and went down, there appeared before him an *Arahant* coming towards him through the air until he came right up in front of him and then slowly came down, almost as if he had brakes. He came right down until he reached the ground, ever so gently, and then sat down in front of him in the most seemly manner. His name was Venerable Kassapa Thera, he was smiling, while his whole countenance was full of radiant brightness and his expression and bearing displayed the mild gentleness of *mettā*. It was as if he were a doctor who was full of concern and thoughtfulness for a sick patient, asking how he was feeling and anxious to help with various medicines and other methods to the best of his ability. Such was the manner of this *Arahant*.

As soon as he had sat down, his whole bearing displayed *mettā* and a willingness to assist the *Ācariya* in Dhamma, he asked quietly:

> "How is it between the five *khandhas* and the heart which is the owner of your round of birth and death *(vaṭṭa)*, are they going alright? Is your *citta* able to see well enough the banefulness of birth and death, and is it wearied of them yet? I feel anxious for you and I am afraid lest your *citta* which has been in the habit of lying asleep without waking up for endless ages, will not be interested enough to want to wake up sufficiently to see the way to go on to *Nibbāna*. For this is a mysterious realm for worldly beings who are not interested in waking out of their sleep. This sleep which is their deluded engrossed absorption in all things which deceive them, which are always there in the realms of worldly beings who delight in their infatuations much more than they delight in knowing and seeing the whole truth which is there to be found in those same realms."
>
> "This is why I came, and now that I am here I would like to praise *(anumodanā)* you for the strength of your faith and the intensity of the practices which you are doing at present."

These were the first few words of greeting spoken by the *Arahant* to the *Ācariya,* out of concern and with *mettā* for him. As for the *Ācariya,* it seemed to him in this meditation vision *(bhāvanā–nimitta)* as if he actually got up and then prostrated to the *Arahant* and greeted him with a full felt heart, even though his heart was still in *samādhi.*

In reply to the first question of the *Arahant* after he had come down out of the sky, he said, in connection with his *samādhi* meditation that:

> "I can put up with the *khandhas* alright in the way that people in the world have to put up with them. But when it comes to the *citta* I am still trying to strive and scramble up so as to see how bad and harmful it is to be self-forgetful and to get involved in all sorts of things which are inwardly troublesome and which lay in wait to deceive me, always causing me to fall into delusion. And thus to get some peace and see the banefulness of the round *(vaṭṭa)* — of *saṁsāra* as far as my mindfulness and wisdom are able."

When the *Ācariya* had finished speaking, the *Arahant* started to reveal Dhamma to him with special emphasis on the *Dhutanga* observances, in much the same way as the previous *Arahant,* finally ending with some explanations of the *Vinaya* (discipline).

The gist of the Dhamma which this *Arahant* revealed to him was based upon the *Dhutanga* observances which the *Ācariya* was correctly practising, thus:

> "The practices which you are doing at present are the right way to act *(sāmīci–kamma).* The Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas,* who were the most wonderful people, used to like living in the lonely forests, in caves, under overhanging cliffs, under the shade of a tree, and in dense jungle. Or in charnel grounds where there are always things to remind one of death. For every day the local people come to dispose of their dead bodies. Bodies of women and men, brothers and sisters, children and old people — all the time. Now you are staying here searching with mindfulness and wisdom into such things that happen, things which are there all the time, so that mindfulness and wisdom shall have a way to rouse yourself up to search for a way out. The Bhikkhus of old lived in the way that you are living and acting now. So the way you are living is right, as it should be, and not scattered and disturbed by things that increase the suffering of the round of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa–dukkha)* so that it accumulates in the heart until one cannot

find anywhere to lay down the load. But in fact beings in the world hardly ever think of laying down the load. Rather do they think, each in their own way, of 'accumulation and development', so that suffering and its causes increase until it becomes immense suffering *(mahanta–dukkha).* Therefore, the birth and death of beings in the world goes on taking place everywhere on earth, and nowhere can one find anything more prevalent than the charnel grounds of beings who are intent on birth and death. Even the whole of this place where we are now sitting down, is the charnel ground of various kinds of life. Nowhere is there a vacant space which we can say is not a charnel ground of beings, and even your own body is a charnel ground. So when there is nothing but the birth and death of beings in this way everywhere, where can we find any peace and comfort?"

"Have you yet examined and seen how even your own body is a charnel ground where various kinds of beings are born and die, in a similar way to those which are external? If you have not yet examined this, it means that your wisdom is still not circumspect enough to make you frightened of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa)* so that you look for a way out, and so that it will no longer come to trouble you and lead you on to be born and to die time after time — endlessly — which is a most vexatious and woeful thing in the eyes of all those who are the wisest of men."

"Wisdom, means the skill and ability of the heart alone which must penetrate into everything without excepting anything — even to pebbles and grains of sand — which are nothing but relative conventional things *(sammuti)* that can also cause one to become involved and caught up in attachments. The wisest of men therefore examine them all and uproot them until there are none left at all."

"You are one of those in the circle of *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* whose heart is firmly intent on attaining the realm which is free from suffering, and you are practising in the well established way of the highest of the Noble Ones *(Ariya–puggala).* So you should use mindfulness and wisdom in the same manner that they used them. Then you will be doing what is correct and in line with the original intention of the *Dhutanga* observances. For these observances were originally established for the purpose of promoting the mindfulness and wisdom of those who use them; and also for the purpose of arousing their skilful ability to know thoroughly every aspect of everything with which they come into contact and for the purpose of being able to uproot and get rid of them one by one."

"This is to be done not merely by looking at these *Dhutanga* observances in an idle, passive way without knowing what they are for, but by knowing their purpose and seeing what *kilesas* and evil states of mind each of the *Dhutanga* practices is aimed at curing; and also knowing what benefits they bestow on those who practise them variously in the proper way. For in truth, each of the *Dhutangas* has its purpose in curing, or pulling out and getting rid of the *kilesas* within oneself root and all. For whatever types of *kilesas* are to be found in the hearts of those living in the world these *Dhutangas* are capable of uprooting them completely, provided that the one who practises has the ability to know the purpose of the *Dhutangas* thoroughly and correctly. For these *Dhutangas* have been the means of purifying very large numbers of ordinary people and turning them into wonderful and special people."

"The way in which you are practising at present is praiseworthy, but this additional explanation is given so as to act as a boost to your mindfulness and wisdom to make them go on increasing and growing more and more. For this is appropriate to the *Dhutangas* which are the means of refining people to make them become steadily more and more clever and sharp-witted — not merely being attached to the words and the idea of 'upholding the *Dhutangas*' by rote, which is just stupidity and complacency and not thinking of going the way of wisdom to search for skill and cleverness to imbue oneself with."

> "Each *Dhutanga* has a very subtle meaning which is difficult to know in all its aspects. Therefore, you should use mindfulness and wisdom to examine and reflect upon each of them, one by one, in fine and subtle detail. By this you will gain immeasurable value from the *Dhutangas.* Even the ultimate attainment of the freedom *(vimutti)* of *Nibbāna* is not beyond the scope of these same *Dhutangas* when acting as the agents of one's development in Dhamma."

"All of the Supreme Ones cherish these forms of Dhamma very much and they entrust their lives and hearts *(citta)* to them. They also admire and commend those who are interested enough to practise the *Dhutangas* and say that, such a person will gain what is valuable, leading him to completion (Enlightenment) without running into obstacles. He will also be able to maintain the tradition of the *Ariyas,* because this is the tradition of the *Ariyas,* the tradition which they have practised in every age and period. This is true,

not only of the religion of the Lord Buddha who attained Enlightenment in this age, for in whatever age and place an enlightened Buddha arises, the *Dhutanga* observances which are always a pair with the religion, are always bound to be there."

"You should not think that these *Dhutanga* observances are only there in the religion of one of the Buddhas, for they have always been there in the religion of every one of the Buddhas, right up to the Buddhist religion of the present day. Each of the Buddhas, who became enlightened in the essence of purity which is completely free from all the *kilesas,* are bound to teach and introduce the *Dhutanga* observances to the Bhikkhus who are his followers, in the same way in every *Sāsana.* Because the *Dhutanga* observances are the most suitable form of practice for those who are ordained; and those who have a heart felt anxiety that they must attain freedom will be able to do so with the firm determination to filter out and remove the *kilesas* from their hearts. This happens immediately once the causes are produced, without delay and without having to wait a long time for the results."

The *Arahant* paused for a moment and the *Ācariya* took the opportunity to ask him a question:

"There are some who are doubtful and think that, since the *Parinibbāna*[62] of the Lord Buddha, more than two thousand years have passed. In such a long time the fruit of a tree and other things in general would have withered in accordance with the law of impermanence *(anicca)* and nothing would be left, not even the dead wood of the tree. In a similar way, other things in the world like industries, businesses and shops would have all fallen to the ground and decayed with nothing left to show for them. Even the hills, so firmly established, can also change and alter for there is nothing which escapes the law of impermanence. So when we consider the "penetration of Dhamma" *(Dhammabhisamaya)* in which the Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* were enlightened and attained in that age, by the time we reach the present day, not even a trace of the skeleton of the path, fruit and *Nibbāna* should remain for all good people to taste by means of those practices which they used. It is likely to have diminished gradually until it vanished in the same way as all other things."

62. *Parinibbāna:* This means the death of the Buddha or of an *Arahant* without further birth taking place. Truly speaking this means the dissolution of the five *khandhas,* but the pure *citta* which is the Buddha or *Arahant* does not die because it is not impermanent *(anicca).*

"For myself, I do not have enough wisdom to be able to correct such wrong ideas as this in a satisfactory way. But today I have the most wonderful opportunity and the unexpected good fortune to be visited by a most exalted *Arahant* who has come through the air and has favoured me with *mettā* and compassion. So by your leave, I will ask this question which comes from my heart: Concerning the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* in the *Sāsana,* which is a revolt against everything of the supposed, relative world *(sammuti),* does this also go the way of nature together with the changing *(anicca)* world? Or what otherwise happens? In other words, when the world changes, does the Dhamma change, when the world deteriorates does Dhamma deteriorate, when the world disappears does Dhamma disappear, and when everything becomes meaningless, can Dhamma also become meaningless? Do these disturbances effect the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* so that it is bound to come to an end, to be cut off and disappear, taking the same course as the whole environment following the Pari*nibbāna* of the Lord Buddha? Or how else should it be?"

"As far as my understanding goes, the *Parinibbāna* of the Lord only concerned the Lord and was not connected with the principles of Dhamma and *Vinaya* which the Lord laid down and taught for the attainment of the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* in any way at all. But there are those who have doubts about whether the time that has elapsed since the *Parinibbāna* of the Lord has effected the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna.* They say, for instance, that the Lord entered *Parinibbāna* more than two thousand years ago and it is likely that the *Sāsana* of the Lord will have steadily deteriorated and that there will thus be no Path and no Fruition of it by now. Also, that even though one may do the practice it will only make for difficulties and be in vain, giving no results at all. This is the sort of thing I have heard and I feel that it is quite contrary to the words of the Buddha and likely to cause wavering and instability in the *Sāsana* and people who are Buddhists, leading to doubt and uncertainty, as can be seen. Such forms of understanding bring no benefit to anyone and only disturb the *Sāsana* and the hearts of people, causing them to be gloomy and confused."

The *Arahant* replied:

"If Dhamma was of the same nature as fruit growing on trees, industries, shops, houses and all sorts of other things in the realm of the relative world

(sammuti), which is subject to the law of impermanence *(anicca),* Dhamma would have disappeared completely, long ago. Then nobody could take it up and know the taste of it with the heart, even just momentarily. Nor would any of the Buddhas and each of their countless *Sāvakas* have any opportunity to come into being in this world of impermanence *(anicca).* Even those countless number of people who will attain Enlightenment in the future could not be, which would mean that the Aryan birth, the Aryan characteristics *(Ariya–vāsanā),* and the Aryan lineage would consequently all be void. But in fact all the Buddhas and all the *Sāvakas* both of the past and future have been and are still appearing, one following from another, steadily without any loss or disappearance of their foundations, their roots (Dhamma). It seems that virtue and good — special people — still appear, to whom those in the world pay homage and worship with *pūjā* as their ideal right up to the present day, and this is because Dhamma is not of the same nature as buildings and houses and things which only wait their time to fall on people and kill them, all being bound by the law of impermanence to this end."

"What else should the saying — 'Dhamma is timeless *(Akāliko)*' — mean if it does not refer to the Dhamma state of absolute purity beyond the bounds of the relative, conventional world? What is the meaning of *Dhammasāra?* The *Dhammasāra* (Dhamma essence) which is timeless; 'that', is the True Dhamma, not be found within the limiting conditions of the 'good Dhamma' *(Kusala–Dhamma)* and the 'evil dhamma' *(akusala–dhamma),* which go the way of impermanence in the same way as all other things in the world. Thus, we say that: 'Dhamma develops', or 'Dhamma deteriorates' — which follows the same principles as the world in general. But there is no room for this in the 'Dhamma essence' — such as the Dhamma in the Heart of the Lord Buddha and in the hearts of all the Enlightened Ones *(Jīṇāsava),* where there is nothing but the 'Timeless Dhamma', where no laws or conditions can get in to influence or harm it."

"This kind of Dhamma is the true essence of Dhamma. Dhamma which has no causes or conditions to combine together and cause all sorts of things to arise — such as all things we find in the world. For however much these things change and lose their meaning, deteriorate or disappear, the Dhamma essence is still Dhamma which has meaning in itself, regardless of whether anyone respects and has faith in it or not. This Dhamma is still able to endure in all its fullness and eternally remain the *'Akālika Dhamma'.* All the Buddhas

and *Sāvakas* pay homage to and revere this Dhamma, and the world also recollects this Dhamma essence and reveres it. The *Parinibbāna* of all the Buddhas, not just for some of them such as the Venerable *Samaṇa* Gotama but for all of them, concerned only their physical bodies which followed the path of the three characteristics *(Ti–lakkhaṇa)*[63] which are always there in all beings and formed things *(sankhāra)* everywhere — and so they just left this world. But this can in no way influence the "Pure–Buddha–Nature" which is this true Dhamma essence, nor cause it to change, to deteriorate or to disappear at all."

"Wherever and whenever any of the Buddhas enter *Parinibbāna* the event is not able to disturb the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* which those who practise in the right way *(sāmīci–kamma)* should still attain in the future. In other words those who go the right way entirely in the same manner as the Buddhas have taught should expect to see results arising continually from their own practice in the same way as if the Buddha was still living. Nothing has really changed, for even if the *Parinibbāna* took place one thousand or ten thousand years ago, they are just relative times and conventions upheld by people in the world. As for this 'Dhamma', it is independent of time or place — as these are understood in the world — for 'Dhamma' depends on Dhamma and not upon any other support or condition which is outside the characteristics of the true Dhamma."

"This 'Dhamma Essence' is the greatest wonder in the world, whether anybody knows it or not. But as to what Dhamma is, and whether it is to be found in the world or not, Dhamma remains just Dhamma, existing in its own nature."

"Therefore, in saying that: 'The Lord Buddha entered *Parinibbāna* between two or three thousand years ago, that the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* has degenerated and faded beyond recovery, and that it is completely lost in antiquity so that even if one were to practise the way, however strictly or well, one would just make difficulties for oneself in vain without getting any appropriate results from it at all'; whoever says such things does not conform to the meaning and intention of the Lord Buddha who proclaimed and taught the world by using the Dhamma–truth *(Sacca–Dhamma).* Nor does this conform to the path or the purpose of the *Sāsana* which was bestowed on us by the Great Teacher, the Buddha who had dispelled all his *kilesas* and

63. These characteristics are: 1) *Anicca* — impermanence, transience, instability. 2) *Dukkha* — discontent, dissatisfaction, suffering. 3) *Anattā* — the five *khandhas* are not self individually or collectively, nor do they have a "self-entity" within them.

reached the state of highest excellence in the world. It is not a principle of the Dhamma teaching in Buddhism which those who have faith in the Great Teacher, the Dhamma and *Vinaya* ever take up, to think about, waste time upon and make obstacles for themselves without bringing them any results at all. In fact it is just such thinking and learning which blocks one's path so that one can find no way out. Therefore, those who have faith in the *Sāsana* which is the Dhamma that the Great Teacher, the pure one, gave us, ought not to talk in such ways, which are like a bed of thorns that stick into themselves. For to do this is like someone who has given up, unable to find a way out to escape from his situation, even though there still is a way out. So he becomes a pathetic, hopeless person, full of self-pity, although he is still alive and capable and should take the opportunity to do something useful while he can."

The *Arahant* went on further to teach in his inspiring way, thus:

"Don't you know that there are still people who are waiting for an opportunity to make themselves into the leader of the *Sāsana* so as to be the great teacher to the world, even though their characters are full of *kilesas* and stupidity? There are still plenty in this world who have such obscene things within them. And how about you? Are you another of those who are waiting for an opportunity to become a *sāvaka* of this obscene teacher?"

The *Ācariya* replied:

"For myself, I have never been disturbed nor wavered from the principles of Dhamma by such talk at all, not even for a single moment of thought. Every moment the *citta* and the body in their various situations are firmly resolved on the purpose of reaching the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* by means of the *Svākkhāta Dhamma*[64] with absorbed interest and joy. The reason I respectfully asked about this was that it seemed to me necessary, in that I am a person who tries to do things to help the world as much as I can, but if I have to rely entirely on my own resources I fear that I would not have sufficient ability to point out the way and set right the doubts in the hearts of those who have these ideas. Because this is something which deeply affects both the sphere of the *Sāsana* and the lay Buddhists who are associated with it.

64. *Svākkhāta Dhamma:* The well taught Dhamma, referring to the teaching of the Lord Buddha.

Therefore when I saw such a good opportunity as this I took my chance respectfully to ask you about it, so that this occasion may be like a bright lamp lighting the way for myself and for those people who have some brightness in their eyes and ears, because of the *mettā* which you are showering on me here. For you Venerable Sir, one of the excellent, most precious ones, have favoured me with *mettā* and you know the whole Dhamma with certainty — which is a rare thing to find in this world of people."

The *Arahant* went on with his teaching:

"To ask such questions for the sake of other people is good and right. But to be truly right you should look at those times when the *citta* is a danger to yourself. Even if there is only a slight danger, you should know that this is so and you should also know how to get rid of it, because internal danger, such as those which we have already talked about, have a capacity to cause harm which is very much greater than that of external dangers. This is well known by all those who are the wisest of men. But so as to make sure that you understand all this, I shall go over the basic facts of these Dhamma truths once again."

"There is no person, power, or thing in the whole universe that can force Dhamma to be void of results for anyone who practises it in the right way *(sāmīci–kamma).* This applies not only to such times and places as we talked of before but anywhere and any time. Whatever powers there may be in all the three realms of the universe, if they were to muster their people and their powers to prevent the Dhamma giving results to those who practise it well, there is no need to fear that they could ever succeed. Dhamma must always be Dhamma and always give results in accordance with Dhamma, so that whenever the right and appropriate practices are done there is nothing which has the power and ability to prevent the attainment of the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* regardless of who it is that practises, where or when. Don't let your thoughts be like thick wet mud so that you tread on thorns that you cannot see, causing pain and suffering to yourself — the one that has such great value — causing its downfall and ruin due to the overruling power of stupidity and ignorance which compels and draws one in their direction. For these are the 'Dhamma truths' *(Sacca–Dhamma)* which each one of us has within ourselves. *The first pair of Dhamma truths which are concerned with involvement and attachment are Dukkha and the Production of*

Dukkha (Samudaya). These two, by their psychic influence are what drive on beings, who do not know the meaning of life and death, to like accumulating them very much without ever being satisfied. In other words, they are what truly block the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* and will not let it arise in the hearts of beings while they still have some liking for them and go about accumulating them."

"Whenever Dukkha arises within the hearts of beings it tends to make them lose all their rational faculties (sati–paññā). Thoughts, which they had previously been able to use in a rational and skilful way, then become completely stupid, self-indulgent and obstructive, leaving them with no way out. All they can do is sit or lie down looking at their own suffering while acting in ways that display their suffering outwardly — as people do who have no way out and no interest in searching for a way that leads out in the right direction."

"*Samudaya,* the Production of *Dukkha,* means thought which arises, grows and develops in endless varieties, or imagination of various kinds, which are derived from the three kinds of craving *(taṇhā)* — these being the cravings, for sensation *(kāma–taṇhā),* to remain the same *(bhava–taṇhā),* and to change and become something else *(vibhava–taṇhā). These three are the leaders, leading one to think, to conceptualise and to imagine endlessly,* and they bring on discontent to burn in one's heart so that it becomes a fire, which turns into the same kind of fire as that which one has already created and has at present, and cannot extinguish. Or, which one has no interest in extinguishing and instead, goes on to develop so that its flames go up and up, and it may go on to set fire to the whole world without there being any way for it to end. *Samudaya* — the production of *Dukkha* consists of these three forms of craving. It is these three which can 'close the door' against the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* so obstructing it as to make it completely unattainable. There is no special occasion or bright light that can get rid of these three, for there is nothing that can do it except the Dhamma Truths *(Sacca–Dhamma).* This is the only thing which is capable of eradicating the production of *Dukkha (Samudaya),* this darkness, and annihilating it with certainty."

"The remaining two Dhamma Truths which are the cure, are the cessation of Dukkha (Nirodha) and the Path (Magga), which are the tools for doing the job. In the whole field of the Production of *Dukkha (Samudaya),* there is nothing which is like these two, nor anything with such ability as they have. *Nirodha is what extinguishes Dukkha, getting rid of it steadily bit by bit, in accordance with*

the strength and power of the Path (Magga) — which consists of moral behaviour *(sīla), samādhi* and wisdom *(paññā).* When the 'Path' is strong enough the *kilesas* are not likely to be able to find anywhere to hide. This then becomes the complete cessation of *Dukkha* without any dependence on the time, place or anything else which most people think to be necessary. Only *Nirodha* and *Magga* perform this function of destroying the *kilesas,* nothing else."

"What difference in results should there be from holding a belief in the Dhamma truths of the Lord Buddha, replete with the Truth of Dhamma, as I have just explained compared with those empty beliefs which are void of substance, showing themselves merely in talk, such as you spoke of earlier? You should use your wisdom to examine this question and gain value from the Dhamma in this. For having come to this point, you should not just let it pass by uselessly. If you have any more doubts left you should bring them up now, because the chance of having a discussion on Dhamma *(Dhammasākaccha)* such as this, which is a true blessing, is rare and hardly ever happens."

Then the *Arahant* remained quiet for a short while, and when he saw that the *Ācariya* was not going to ask any more questions, he went on to talk more about the *Vinaya* (rules of discipline and training).

"The Vinaya when practised is what decorates the Samaṇa (recluse), confirming on him a gracefulness in his behaviour and manner. For whoever strictly observes the Vinaya will have graceful manners of body, speech and mind. The gracefulness of a *Samaṇa* is in his modes of behaviour which are faultless and it shows up in everything he does, and the *Samaṇa* who holds intimately to the *Vinaya* in his life and ways of living is one who is at peace. He is at peace when living alone, at peace when living with his colleagues and with other people generally. When he is in the forests and hills or when confronted with dangers of various kinds, nothing dares to harm him for the *Devatās* protect him and people are very fond of him. For the *Vinaya* acts both as a source of nutrition and a protective wall preventing the Path and Fruition from breaking out and seeping away."

"The life of a *Samaṇa* is the life of someone who has pure moral behaviour, a life which is lively and cheerful. We are *Samaṇa*s and 'Sons of the *Sākya*' who have pure moral behaviour and for this we do not have to be born just at the time of the Lord Buddha. In whatever age and place we are born

> and whatever our race, colour or nationality may be, we are still *Samaṇas* and sons of the *Sākya,* from the most senior to the most junior — the most recently born. As parents who have many children who were born in various places and times, but all of them are children of the same parents."

After he had come to the end of his talk on Dhamma, the *Arahant* went on to give him his final instruction before leaving, out of his concern for this *Ācariya* and for the Buddha *Sāsana,* in the most moving way.

> "I am going to leave you now — at least, in so far as the conventional world understands this in terms of images and forms. You must always have the *Sāsadā* in you, which means to have the Dhamma and *Vinaya* present in your heart, your body and in your speech in every situation. In gaining freedom there is nothing which you can be more sure of and confident of than the Dhamma and *Vinaya,* which are the "Dhamma of Salvation" *(Niyyānika–Dhamma).* You should not take up and think about anything unless it is for the purposes of Dhamma and *Vinaya* — which are the heart of the Great Teacher *(Sāsadā).* You should let them enter you to help you, and then purity and freedom will be your priceless treasure, for you alone."

Just before the *Arahant* went, by rising up into the air and going up into the sky, he looked at this *Ācariya* with affection and *mettā* for a few moments. Then he gradually rose up, steadily and slowly, which was a way of capturing the *Ācariya's* attention and making a deep and lasting impression on him which would be fixed in his memory *(atītārammaṇa)* from then on.

As for the *Ācariya,* he sat with faith, yearning and regret, and with complete concentrated attention through his meditation practice *(citta–bhāvanā)* as if he did not even blink his "inward" eyes at that time. Then the vision of the *Arahant* disappeared in the sky without a trace — except for the memory of this vision which was so deeply impressed within him that it would never fade for the rest of his life. It was a strange and wonderful experience such as he had rarely come across before.

That night he practised his meditation until dawn, the same as he did on the night the *Arahant* Bhākula came through the sky to visit him and explain Dhamma. The *Arahant* Kassapa was with him for about three hours while he explained Dhamma and talked generally. When the *Arahant* had left, his *citta* then withdrew from *samādhi,* after which he steadily recalled the Dhamma

and *Vinaya*, which came from the *mettā* of the *Arahant,* and thought it over once again. Doing this he became completely absorbed, and this state of bliss spread throughout his whole body and mind so that he forgot all about sleeping that night. For the Dhamma which he had received from that *Nimitta*[65] which he told us about was profound and it was hard to describe the truth of it correctly. Even at other times when his *citta* was not in *samādhi* meditation, it made him recall and think of the *Arahant* all the time, and it seems that this gave his *citta* strength and encouragement for a long time. Meanwhile his performance in practising the way became firm and resolute, and it seems that the strength of his intention in Dhamma to reach and attain that refuge which the *Arahant* had explained with such *mettā,* became unusually intense. As if he would reach and attain the "Dhamma territory" which is free from *Dukkha* at every moment that he returned to recollecting the *Arahant's* instructions. (In some places the *Arahant* stressed what he was saying as being important for the *Ācariya* personally. But the writer feels that it would be inappropriate to relate these parts, for he fears it may harm the *Ācariya* and upset the reader also. The writer therefore asks you to forgive him for these omissions which some readers may have liked to read fully.)

An Encounter With a Poisonous Snake

This was a strange and unexpected event which occurred in a remarkable manner as in the following account.

The *Ācariya* was going to stay in a certain cave to practise the way of Dhamma of a recluse *(Samaṇa–Dhamma).* But before he went to the cave, the villagers in that district warned him that a black poisonous snake lived in that cave and had been there for many years. They said that its body was no larger than a large flashlight battery in girth and rather longer than one meter, but it was incredibly fierce. This snake had already done harm to some people but everyone was afraid to do anything to it for fear that there may be some hidden power behind it. Finally the villagers gave it the name of "The Lord of the Cave". Nobody was likely to go and spend a night there, they said, for if

65. *Nimitta:* This is a form of mental perception which is usually visual, but may occur in terms of any of the senses. It is somewhat like a dream image, but usually appears starkly clear and often in a normal state of consciousness, so that the *nimitta* may appear to be a physical object in the world. Their causes are various, usually internal, but sometimes external as well.

anyone did so, this snake was sure to come out either in the evening, during the night or in the morning, spreading its hood and hissing threateningly. If it was able to it would actually bite them as well and there were many cases in which people had been its victims, so that now everybody was afraid of it and nobody dared to spend a night in that cave.

The Venerable Ajaan however, thought that he would like to go and stay in that cave to go on doing his work on the way of Dhamma. Then he asked the villagers to take him there even though they told him that nobody would believe how fierce this snake was and what harm would come to him due to it, nobody could tell. So they did not want him to go and stay there, but he persuaded them, using reason, pointing out that if one's time has come one will die even if one is resting in one's own home, and nobody can do anything about it.

> "I have seen this often enough to give me a confidence in *kamma* which is deeply rooted in my heart, and I have lived in caves enough so that I am quite used to it — so much in fact that if it were possible, my body and heart should have turned into rocks and mountains already and would not put up with its present human state. Even if I go to stay in that cave, if I have not reached the end of my time, I am still likely to go on living the life of a Bhikkhu, much as I have been doing up to the present and I am not likely to change into something else. A snake is an animal, I am a human being and also a Bhikkhu who constantly holds close to the way of moral behaviour *(sīla)* and Dhamma. I do not envy anyone, nor do I oppress and harm them, so if the snake attacks me and I die, it should be because of my bad *kamma* and the evil I have done in the past. This would be better than turning back, afraid, the bad results of which would follow me and come back on me in the future. The supremely wise would also praise me, saying that I truly believed in *kamma.* For these reasons I want to go there even if I should die because of it."

Having said this he set off for the cave with some villagers to show him the way.

When he got there and stayed in this cave he felt physically well and comfortable and staying there alone, his mind was contented and easy. On the second day he was there, in the evening, he saw the black snake sliding out of a crevice in the rocks, and gradually, slowly, it came up right in front

of him while he was sitting there on a small bamboo platform, contemplating the teachings of Dhamma, and it came in the manner of one that instinctively considers itself to be superior in its power to harm others. When the *Ācariya* saw this snake coming up to him without fear, and as if it really meant to do something to him, he immediately recalled what the villagers had told him and he knew that this must be the "killer snake" that they talked about, otherwise it would never have displayed itself in such a bold, fearless manner. The *Ācariya* thought:

> "I have come here to practise Dhamma without any thoughts of doing harm to anyone. Even with small creatures I always have *mettā* for them and look on their lives as if it was my own life. I never pride myself that I am a person and a Bhikkhu whose status is much higher than that of other creatures who are companions in birth, growing old, pain and death throughout the three realms of the universe. Even this black snake is one of my companions in happiness and suffering, birth and death also. But why then, when I am showing no signs of contention, or any intent to hit it or harm it at all, why should this snake be so determined to come and kill me who would be its friend in life and death, for on this hill it will not find another friend who would be more reliable. When I reflect on my moral behaviour, it is pure in Dhamma, as for example the *mettā,* of which my heart is full, that comes about due to the power of my *citta* and Dhamma that I have developed by training. If despite this, this creature is still bold and callous enough to kill me, it must be because in a past life I have been extremely cruel and ferocious so that there is not even an abyss in the great hell which would be able to put up with me and give me the deserved results of such bad *kamma.* Now I must accept the ferocity of this snake to whom I have been ferocious in the past and there is no escape from it, and I must not now try to escape from my evil *kamma.* For if I was bold enough to do such things, I must now be bold enough to accept the evil results. Then I will be worthy of the name of one who truly believes in *kamma.*"

Having come to this decision he then spoke to the snake which had stopped in front of him about two yards away and spread its hood out waiting for an opportunity. He said:

> *"I have come here, without any evil intentions or any desire to harm anyone, but for the purpose of developing Dhamma for the sake of happiness for myself and for all*

fellow beings. Regardless of what form they may have or who they are I spread mettā for their happiness. You who live here should also be able to partake of it. If you still long for physical ease and peace of heart, in the way that all other beings do everywhere, you should accept this *mettā* Dhamma which is peaceful and melts all hardness, and make it part of yourself. This is far better than intimidating and killing others which will bring nothing of value; and even if you hurt and kill others with your deadly poison, it will not make you any better, virtuous or venerable, so that you get happiness and develop towards a higher state. But rather it will lead you down to be submerged in a sea of *dukkha* such as hell, for this is the result which comes from tormenting and killing others. I do not accept nor feel any gladness that what you do has any merit or virtue at all, because it only increases your *dukkha* which torments and presses in on yourself. I can only accept the ways of those who do not torment and kill others, as being actions which do not bring fear and trouble to them. So one has peace in oneself and one brings peace to others. Thus looking on each other as if an intimate friendship has existed for aeons and seeing that we are all friends and companions together in *dukkha*, birth, growing old, pain and death, it is not right to cause *dukkha* and anxiety to each other, for it only increases one's own *dukkha* as well."

"I have come here to make friends with you and all other creatures, and you should be sympathetic to me for I am a loyal and honest friend, so please accept my friendship and *Mettā–Dhamma* and then go and live in peace. Later on, if you want to come to me again from time to time you can do so whenever you want to. I am happy to be your friend always, and I do not have any feelings of revulsion that you are an animal and I am a person and a Bhikkhu, for I just consider that we are friends together in birth and in death and I do not think in terms of who is superior and who is inferior. For, as always, those tendencies of perfection *(vāsanā–pāramī)* which beings have within them are different in each individual, depending on the effort they have put into developing them. So it is possible that you may have tendencies of perfection which are more mature and stronger than mine, there's no way of telling; and also, because all beings each have their individual *kamma,* good and bad, intimately attached to them, it may be that when you leave this life you will abandon the state of an animal and slip into a higher level to be born as a human being. Then you may even attain to the perfection of purity and freedom before I do. For I am still struggling with the foul *kilesas,* so it is quite possible that this can be so as

long as you do not create more evil to weigh you down, such as making bad *kamma* now in regard to myself."

Having spoken to the snake, he then set a resolve in his heart to produce the overpowering force of *Mettā–Dhamma,* which has always upheld the world, to make this snake change its attitude from that of being an enemy into that of being a close friend in Dhamma. After this a surprising and wonderful thing happened and it is hard to say what brought it about. But something caused the snake, which in a few seconds would have attacked the *Ācariya,* to change its attitude away from that of being an enemy to him quite suddenly. It immediately drew back its head and lay flat on the ground in a submissive attitude and remained there quite still for about ten minutes. Then it turned around slowly and gradually moved away and disappeared from sight.

The next day, the snake came to the *Ācariya* again, and it continued to come to him almost every day from then on while he stayed there, but it never again displayed a fierce and frightening attitude as it had the first time. It just came out quietly and slowly to the same place it had been before and lay there calmly and quite still for a while and then turned and went away. The *Ācariya* said that once again he saw and realised the wonder of *Mettā–Dhamma* while he was there, in a manner that touched his heart.

From that day on, he and the snake lived there in harmony without any mistrust or doubts about each other. Whenever the snake wanted to come out and wander about in the vicinity of the mouth of the cave it would do so in the manner of an animal which is quite accustomed to living with people without any suspicion and watchfulness on either side. It would also go out wandering about at any time it wanted to and not only at particular times of the day as it used to before, as the villagers had told him.

In regard to this kind of story, for a long time I have been quite ready to believe in the truth of such things. If people say that I am a fool I am ready to accept it, but I do so because I have also come across such things, and so have all the other *Ācariya*s such as Venerable Ajaan Mun for example. They have often told stories of how animals of all kinds were never afraid of the Bhikkhus and how they liked to come and live in their vicinity. They would come in groups and swarms, both large animals such as wild boars, ordinary

deer and barking deer; and small animals like chipmunks, squirrels, civets and snakes. This is because animals generally speaking know the mannerisms and modes of behaviour of those who do not torment and kill them.

In whatever place Bhikkhus go to stay for a time, before long there will generally be various animals coming to live there and to look on that place as a sanctuary. And the Bhikkhus who have *mettā,* like to play with them and also to bring lots of food to give those animals which like bananas, fruit and rice. Water is a necessity for most animals and so, when the Bhikkhus see a lot of animals coming to live round about, they look for vessels to put water in and they place them wherever it is suitable for these animals to drink.

It is because the Bhikkhus have *mettā* in the *citta* as a basic underlying foundation that people and animals have a special, intimate confidence in them, which is appropriate to their peaceful calling, for they have never been any danger to others. Therefore the story which this *Ācariya* told is readily acceptable as being in conformity with experiences which others have had since the origin of Buddhism.

Generally speaking, the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who practises with determination and courage will tend to come across dangerous situations continually, but he manages to escape unharmed without becoming a victim of these dangers. This encourages one to think and feel confident that, those who have Dhamma in their hearts and who are absolutely intent on the pursuit of Dhamma will always triumph by way of Dhamma when they come across the various things that happen to them. It is rare that anything harms them so that they lose out and come to serious damage as so often happens to others. It seems almost as if they have some mysterious supernatural protection within them which is difficult to describe and cannot be explained to others. But this is the truth, for the writer knows from his friends and colleagues who have often told him of incidents of this kind that they have come across.

This Venerable Ajaan has a very resolute, determined character and likes to go off and live on his own, but he does not like mixing with his friends and associates. The reasons he gives for this go to one's heart, for he said:

> "When one goes off alone and lives alone it makes one have the mindfulness to recollect and know oneself all the time. One is not likely to forget

> oneself and to go out and become involved with all sorts of things as happens when living with friends and colleagues who are sometimes bound to talk together. Whereas, when one lives alone one's only concern is oneself and there are no distracting concerns in connection with any companions. Whatever attitude one's body is in one continues to strive for Dhamma associated with mindfulness which is there continually without any breaks. And anyone who has mindfulness present with him is likely to have a way to know well about all sorts of things which happen in himself. Even when he comes to a time of crisis, he is not full of attachments and concerns in regard to other people, for he is responsible for himself. And when the time has finally come for him to submit his life to the way of nature, he does so in the manner of Dhamma. No fuss, no concern, and no holding back, which would be a worrisome burden. Thus he submits to death according to the circumstances, relaxed, at ease with no concern or worry. As far as the corpse and its disposal are concerned, once their owner has relinquished all concern and anxiety, what remains is a worthless lump of matter from then on, which becomes covered with earth and grass like all other things and there is nothing left there which is special or unusual."

What the *Ācariya* said was worth hearing, it was pleasant and went to one's heart, but it was also well suited to the character of one who had set himself to be a "Son of the *Sākya,* The Supreme Buddha *(Sākyaputta Buddhajinarasa)*" following truly in the Lord's footsteps, and it is rare that one meets anyone like this. After hearing what he said, one stores it in one's memory to bring joy to one's mind and to uplift one's heart by recollecting it often. Stories of his life will be good examples for future generations, spreading out into the future, so that the *Dhutanga* observances which have been passed down to us Bhikkhus shall not be buried and wasted, which would be a sad loss and a cause for sorrow.

He has shown that there are still those who strive to follow the way and to gain the fruits which come from their own practice, and the line of continuity is not yet broken of those who attain more and more calm and happiness as they reach successively higher levels of the *citta* and Dhamma. They start from the levels of *samādhi,* reaching the levels of wisdom *(paññā)* until it changes into the levels of attaining freedom *(vimutti)* from the influence of the *"Ti–lakkhaṇa"* — these being: *Anicca* (transience), *Dukkha* (discontent — suffering), and *Anattā* (being not-self), which all those who have *kilesas* are stuck with.

Those Bhikkhus who like to live in the forests, in the hills, in caves and under overhanging cliffs seem to have stories which are much more interesting and much more likely to set the reader thinking about them than those Bhikkhus who live in more ordinary places. The *Ācariya* whose stories we are presently considering illustrates this point well. If we were to give him a pseudonym and call him "The Adventurer", it would suit him without being in any way disrespectful, because his adventurous encounters were for the purpose of clearing out the "weeds" and searching for the true Dhamma. So this pseudonym accords with his mode of practice which is very much that of being a warrior or an adventurer who never gives in nor retreats.

One may laugh at this, for it hardly seems that the instances related above are worthy of such praise. But the reader should first consider the following stories before deciding whether he was a "warrior" at the moment when he was actually face to face with a crisis. I think the reader may therefore learn to admire the courage of this *Ācariya* in the following stories.

Encounters With Various Tigers

At one time the *Ācariya* was staying in a cave. One night when the moon was waxing, the sky was bright and starry and the weather was calm and pleasant, the *Ācariya* was walking *caṅkama* in front of the cave. At that time there was a very large tiger with a huge round head, as big as he had ever seen and, speaking colloquially, as large as one of our earthenware water pots. To begin with he heard it growling in a frightening and threatening manner about twenty yards away. Then it started to roar, and it roared as loud as it could, until it seemed that the whole mountain was vibrating. While it was growling the *Ācariya* had still not been able to see it. But before long he saw it emerge from the background coming straight towards him and roaring full volume, until it was about four yards away when it stopped, stood there and sat on it haunches. It did not show any other sign that it would attack him but just sat there, much in the way a dog would sit in front of one. He could see it quite clearly now, its stripes and all, because he had a candle lantern lit and hung up to give light for walking *caṅkama*.

When the *Ācariya* saw this tiger come and sit in front of him, he thought to himself:

> "Why has this large tiger come here? This district covers a large area and there is plenty of room for it to wander about, so why does it not go away? Instead, it comes here, apparently thinking of having a bit of fun by showing its superiority over a human being who is afraid of such things."

He stood there for a short while looking at this tiger sitting in front of him and roaring to its hearts content. The *Ācariya* felt a bit of apprehension in his heart, but it was only slight and he had no external symptoms or signs of fear at all. Then he slowly walked towards it, speaking to it, saying:

> "This is not the place for you to be wandering about, for this is where a Bhikkhu is working to develop the Dhamma of a recluse *(Samaṇa–Dhamma),* so what have you come for? You should go and wander about over there where you can play with others of your kind. So go! For Bhikkhus are not made of brick and stone, and they are afraid of frightening things in the same way as all other animals."

Having finished speaking he then walked straight towards the tiger. He said that he got to within about a yard of it when it leapt away suddenly and disappeared, but where it went he did not know. In fact it disappeared so quickly it was as if it had gone by magic. He looked for it all around but could see no trace of it which surprised him and he has wondered about it ever since, because it could not have disappeared so quickly. The place where he was staying and the place where this large tiger was sitting was clear and open and there was nothing there which was enough to give cover or to obstruct his view or prevent him seeing it the moment after it leapt away. So he was puzzled and kept wondering about it all the time. Later on when he went to visit Venerable Ajaan Mun he took the opportunity to tell him what had happened and to ask him about the tiger which jumped away and disappeared so fast and how such a thing could happen. Venerable Ajaan Mun explained it to him saying:

> "That was not a real tiger but one created by the *Devas,* for these *Devas* have many magical powers which are beyond the scope of us people. They are able to take on the form of a gross body or a subtle body, or create a mental image *(nimitta)* of an animal, a tiger, a man or women without any difficulty. Sometimes when they come to visit me they come in various different forms and sometimes the same *Deva* will come in different forms on

different occasions. That tiger which came to visit you, if it had been a real tiger, coming up in front of a person like that one must assume that it had the intention to eat the person for certain, even though it knew that man is held in awe by all animals including tigers."

"There are tigers which act under the control of *Devas* and there are those which are the *Deva* himself taking on a created form *(nimitta),* and the one which visited you was of this latter form. This is why when it leapt away, it disappeared so abnormally fast that you could not see and follow what happened to it and where it went."

"I have become well accustomed to animals, tigers, *Devaputta* and *Devadhītā* coming to me.[66] For when one goes to live in the hills and forests alone one goes for the sake of Dhamma, and because the Dhamma is very powerful, all animals have respect and love for it, and so the heart which has Dhamma in it will also be powerful. But the power of Dhamma is not like worldly power which always waits for a chance to become aggressive, and those who are threatened by it are truly afraid while it threatens them. But their hearts don't want to submit to the threat of this worldly power, and as soon as there is a chance they begin to take revenge on it, and we can see this happening in the world quite often. Therefore, where only worldly power is used, there is no Dhamma in it to back it up and the world finds great difficulty in maintaining peace and calm. So the Lord taught that the world should be governed by Dhamma, and people should govern each other by the way of Dhamma by relying upon what is right, good and appropriate as the authority, and not by taking emotional preferences and conceited opinions as the authority."

> "Dhamma has no form or substance which we can see with our physical eyes, but Dhamma is that nature which is most subtle and recondite and beyond all comparisons with any relative conventions. However subtle the heart *(citta)* is, Dhamma is equally subtle, and the heart is the abode of all Dhammas."

"Apart from the heart, there is nowhere else that is a suitable abode for Dhamma and therefore, Dhamma is not easy to talk about even though one knows it full well in one's heart. That is, with the exception of those who practise the way and know Dhamma at various levels and stages; with them

66. *Devaputta:* a demi-god or son of a *Deva. Devadhītā:* a female *Deva.*

there can be discussion and a good enough mutual understanding. But for those who know Dhamma completely, and have realised the full range of the *citta* and Dhamma, when they discuss Dhamma they understand each other with complete certainty in all aspects and nuances. Questions such as: 'What is the meaning of Dhamma?' or 'Where is it to be found?', they already know without having to waste time in explanations. Those who must still depend on asking questions and the answers they receive have not yet attained the qualities of one who knows the field of Dhamma in full measure — this is the nature of the true Dhamma. But if the heart is false it will produce false Dhamma, and however long one goes on asking questions and receiving answers one only gets a lot of views and opinions and a heart full of the conceit of knowledge which can never agree with others. These are only the names and symbols of Dhamma, and in this way one gets only the names and symbols of Dhamma, and nothing of the true Dhamma filters into one's heart. *Anybody can learn and memorise the names and symbols of Dhamma because they are things which anybody should be able to memorise. But the important thing is the true Dhamma whose name and symbol one has naturally in oneself without having to learn it by repetition and memorising — and this kind of Dhamma is difficult to practise, difficult to see and difficult to know.*"

"The reason why I said just now that the true Dhamma is difficult to practise and to know, and that it does not arise by asking questions and receiving answers, is because its whole nature is truth and this is the end point of all questions and problems. In addition, this Dhamma is always in the world, for it is eternal, neither developing nor deteriorating under any circumstances. So when we talk about the power of Dhamma, it is this Dhamma that is meant — what else could it be?"

"I am very uncertain whether you and the others who are listening will be able to understand and follow every aspect of the Dhamma that I have just told you, but this was the right time to speak so it was necessary to do so — for it is said "Talk about Dhamma at the right time is one of the greatest blessings *(kālena dhammasākacchā etam maṅgalamuttamaṁ).*"

This was the Dhamma which Venerable Ajaan Mun gave in answer and explanation to this Venerable Ajaan and to others present who were his colleagues and who were listening also. But I had to write this based on what I heard from this *Ācariya.* And although I may not have understood every word of it I

have tried to write down everything, because I am sure that as different people have different abilities and cleverness, there are bound to be some who are able to understand the words of Venerable Ajaan Mun quite clearly, even though I may not be able to do so. So I have written it down for others to work out its meaning in the hope that it will be of value to all of us in so far as this is possible. Because the words of someone like of Venerable Ajaan Mun, even though amounting to only two or three sentences, are usually Dhamma of a kind that one rarely hears. Even though one may not understand it, one still feels satisfied to hear it and to write it down so that those who read it in the future may be helped in their contemplation of Dhamma, which may be a means of promoting their mindfulness and wisdom to some extent.

There are still many more such sayings of Venerable Ajaan Mun's, and I will include them from time to time as this account of the ways of practice involve Venerable Ajaan Mun, and according to their suitability — up to the end of this book.

There was another cave in which this same Ācariya stayed and he stayed here longer than elsewhere. But it seems that there were no tigers or other animals which came to bother him and cause any difficulties. That is, until he had almost reached the time for him to leave the cave and go wandering and seeking for Dhamma as was his disposition.

Early one morning when it was almost time for him to go for *piṇḍapāta,* he heard a big tiger growling and roaring and coming right up to where he was staying. As soon as he saw it coming up to him and roaring, his hair stood on end and he started to shake all over and he was so frightened that his heart almost stopped. (On this occasion his *citta* could not yet have become firm and strong enough. But in writing about this *Ācariya,* I do not know in what order the events occurred, for I did not ask him when each one took place. I just took note of each event as he told them, so I do not know in what order they should be to conform to the *Ācariya's* development in the practice of Dhamma. Therefore it would be best if the reader just takes in the gist of each story by itself.)

He must have been very frightened, because the tiger walked straight up to him in a genuinely determined manner even though it had seen him since it emerged from the forest, and came towards him. For normally it should have

stopped for a few moments when it first saw him, but it kept on walking and growling until it came within about four yards of him. Then it stopped and sat down like a domesticated dog and looked straight at the *Ācariya,* staring without blinking, but it did not crouch nor make any sign that it would attack him, in fact its manner was very like the tiger in the story we wrote about previous to this one. This tiger also showed no serious intention to do him any harm — but a tiger is a fearsome animal and even though its actions may not give cause for fear, one is still almost bound to be afraid of it.

When the *Ācariya* saw the tiger looking at him, he looked straight back at it with fear for a short while. Then he recollected himself and as soon as he was able to set up his mindfulness, he raised his arm and pointed his finger straight at it, saying:

> "This is not the place for you to be wandering about, but a place for Bhikkhus to stay and practise meditation. Now go away to where there is more forest and more hills than there are here."

But it just sat there looking at him without any sign of going away. So the *Ācariya* picked up a stick and pointed it at the tiger saying:

> "Go away! There are plenty of hills where you can go wandering about, so don't go on sitting there staring and making a Bhikkhu frightened. I am not an animal, not meat; I am not tiger's food like they are; I am a Bhikkhu who is possessed of moral behaviour *(sīla)* and Dhamma. So don't stay here making me afraid, for soon, when you die you will fall into the fearful abyss of hell. Don't say I haven't warned you!"

Then he pointed the stick at the tiger again, saying:

> "You must go now, for I am very afraid of you; your eyes are the eyes of a tiger, more sharp and penetrating than anything else and if you go on looking at me for a long time to make me very frightened so that I die, you are sure to fall into hell."

After which he moved from where he had been standing pointing the stick at the tiger and strode straight towards it. Immediately it leapt away and disappeared. When it had gone his own thoughts came up to frighten him some

more: "What if it should follow me while I go for *piṇḍapāta?*" For it was thick jungle all the way, but he never saw the tiger as he thought he would.

That day his thoughts were all tainted with fear. He was afraid that it may come again, and during the night he thought of nothing but the tiger coming to get him within the next few moments, until he was unable to develop any concentration at all. So he had to teach and placate himself almost the whole night until eventually his heart submitted to the teaching and he was able to go down into a calm state of peace. From then on all his fear disappeared in a state of calm and happiness.

After that he never saw the tiger again for the rest of the time he was there. He said that this tiger was very big and long and truly very frightening. It seems as though it was probably one of those mysterious tigers for it was as big as the one that came to him in the middle of the night in the previous story of this *Ācariya.* It's behaviour and characteristics were similar and it leapt away very fast in the same way, which makes one think that it was likely to have been a tiger created by the *Devas,* as Venerable Ajaan Mun explained, which when seen is so frightening that one tends to lose all one's reason and all control of one's senses.

The Venerable Ajaan explained the value of living in the forest and the value of the *citta* which has faced up to all sorts of happenings. His explanations were wonderfully impressive, but I cannot remember much of it because I have a tendency to forget easily. He said that when necessity arose, in difficult circumstances of various kinds which put the heart under compulsive pressure, he got a feeling as if there was something giving protection within him of a strange and unusual kind which is impossible to describe. Under the pressure of such critical circumstances, the growth and development of the *citta* took place with ease and very fast which was very different from the normal way of things. This is what made him like living in places which are dangerous and full of uncertainty, even though normally he tended to be timid, easily frightened and cautious. For when he was confronted with these fearful experiences he felt his heart moving up to a higher level every time they occurred. This happened in the most strange and unexpected way which amazed him, and he actually wanted these fearful experiences to occur frequently so that his

heart may strive to develop itself and grow up more and more by depending on these experiences to assist it.

Living in the forests and hills is beneficial in subtle and strange ways which is hard to convey to others; although the *Ācariya* never had any desire to talk with others about living in such places, because the nature of this kind of living is only suited to people whose characters have a tendency in this direction. As for the *Ācariya* himself, whenever he left the forest to live in more usual places or in the ordinary forest, his heart tended to be lazy, careless and over confident and he had little interest in helping himself, so that the results which his heart should have been getting hardly ever appeared. He ate more food than when he was living in more rigorous conditions, and he also slept a lot and was more lazy. Then emotional concerns began to arise gradually and to increase every day while mindfulness and wisdom deteriorated and diminished. Summing up all his characteristics he said:

> "While living in places where people normally lived I could see no development or improvement taking place in myself, and for me to live in such places would be just waiting for the day when I shall die, without gaining any value from it. So I thought that if I did not want to die in the manner of a worthless person, I had better go away and search for Dhamma for the sake of my own salvation. Having reached this conclusion I made up my mind to go into the forests and hills again where I had always been."
>
> "The heart that has experienced peace and calm and which has been bright and scintillating with wisdom, derived from living in the forests and hills, in caves and under overhanging cliffs, cannot be made to come and live in conditions where it is cramped and difficult and where no Dhamma touches it at all. It has got to get back to the forests and hills in accordance with its nature; and as soon as it does so the heart feels easy and relaxed in conformity with the pleasant environment, without having to force or coerce it at all."
>
> "The effort made in practising the way and the various attitudes and postures of the body then blend together in harmony; and the mindfulness and wisdom which used to go hand in hand with the effort, then arise by themselves without having to call them up or force them to be there. The tendency to be lazy, to eat a lot and to sleep a lot, all die away of themselves, and in place of them whatever arises is Dhamma. Then those things which

are not Dhamma — which were so difficult to drive out while living in ordinary, more civilised places — all gradually drop away and disappear without any need to use a lot of effort to get rid of them, which one has to when living in ordinary places."

"Eating, sleeping, reducing emotional concerns and striving to promote the way, all change and become harmonious, each being done in the right order and for the right amount of time — which is very different from the way it was when I was living in more ordinary places. This made me think how the task of extracting and getting rid of the *kilesas* is very much easier when living in the forests and hills than in more usual places."

The *Ācariya* said that, going by his own experience of living in ordinary places, instead of extracting and getting rid of the *kilesas* in the way he had been led to believe, he found in fact, that he was accumulating *kilesas* in every position and posture which he assumed. This meant that he ate a lot because craving *(taṇhā)* came gently whispering to him that he should eat plenty, for the food was of good flavour, easily digested, good for the body's health, well suited to his nature, — and well suited to the nature and tendencies of the *kilesas!* The *kilesas* liked it so much that they must be given plenty. He also slept too much, because the *kilesas* came whispering to him that he should rest a lot, otherwise he would be tired and weak and would not be able to strive for Dhamma with his full strength. But when the time actually came for him to strive for Dhamma with his full strength it in fact turned out to be the time for resting. In other words, he just went on lying there without having any fixed time when he should get up — for the *kilesas* never made any decision as to when he should get up! And his "striving with full strength" never showed up at all for him to see it, so that he could say that he had worked hard for so many hours this day and night. Instead, the *kilesas* lulled him to sleep from the time he finished eating his meal until dusk. He never saw his striving for Dhamma gain power over and penetrate into the laziness which arose from eating too much food. His thinking and imagination then increased until they went beyond all reasonable limits, and all the time in every case, his thought and imagination was concerned with nothing but the story of craving, the cause of *dukkha (taṇhā–samudaya).* They led the way, taking him on a tour through all sorts of buildings, places and halls belonging to the King and Queen of the three cravings *(kāma–taṇhā, bhava–taṇhā, vibhava–taṇhā),* all prepared and

ready to entertain the tourist who had eaten so much food his belly was over full, and to appease his emotional problems.

Laziness was very much in evidence, for if his head touched his pillow all his cares immediately vanished, and if anyone or anything came to rouse him up it was quite useless. He said:

> "Eating a lot, lying down sleeping a lot, and being very lazy have always been companions that nobody can separate. Laziness is the most important member of this group and it gets support from the other two members. Wherever these three comrades go, they go together, never separating in life or death. If I was unable to wash them out and get rid of them, then I would have to go off into the forests and hills to find a tiger to help me drive them out, as well as using the methods of taking little food and having few amenities, to bring them under control. For otherwise I would have gone on like this until I died in their tight grip with no hope of escaping."
>
> "In order to overpower them so that their influence would weaken, I opposed the desires of my heart and went to live in places where they did not want to go — places where they were afraid. Then in all ways, the effort I made in striving for Dhamma developed smoothly and consistently, and whatever way it went, its way was the way of Dhamma and not the way of the *kilesas* and craving as it had been when I was living under ordinary conditions. For under such conditions the *kilesas* could easily take charge of me whereas I never had a chance to take charge of them at all." He said: "My character is of a type that is difficult to train and discipline and it was essential for me to find a suitable place and conditions to help in doing this by forcing it to accept training and discipline in a different way. Then I would at least be able to breathe more freely without being weighed down, clogged up and unable to think all the time. Living in the forests, in the hills, in caves and under overhanging cliffs in the way I have been accustomed to living is, I feel, well suited to my character and temperament in that it enabled me to have some calm and peace of heart. For my character is thick with *kilesas* and dull in wisdom."

The *Ācariya* said how when he was still fairly young, he was very zealous in self-discipline, which included fasting, eating little, wandering about and living in the forests and hills. He never felt easy in his heart about leaving them to go and stay in more ordinary places as most other Bhikkhus do, and

he only did so when he was compelled to. Staying in ordinary places showed him quite clearly that if he was ever to make the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* become the wealth of his heart, he must undergo training and discipline of the most rigorous kind. But if he was to go the way of submission to the power of craving he would live like an animal without a master and in a few days he would see the results of its influence quite clearly. This was the reason why he could not live in ordinary places.

When he tried to practise the way of living in a forest environment such as those which we have already mentioned, his heart turned and became peaceful, mindfulness and wisdom which had never been there became apparent, and steadily, as he went on with his training and discipline, he came to know and experience things which he had never before encountered. This gave his heart the encouragement which enabled him to fight those obstacles to his development as need arose from time to time. Until finally, staying in such places brought a deeply felt satisfaction, and he saw how they were the right places to correct those bad characteristics of his, and how they are also places which become the "Temple of Dhamma" *(Vimāna–Dhamma)* in the most unexpected way. The *Ācariya* said:

> "Right up to the present day, my heart has nothing but praises and gratitude for those places in the forests and the hills where I lived with ease of heart. I would like to go and live there, until they become the place of my grave when I come to the end of my life, for I do not want to die in a place which is all distracted and turbulent. To die in those forests and hills is to die in peace, joyfully in Dhamma with nothing acting as a disturbance to pull and influence one, for such things are nothing but a distracting nuisance. The heart is then intent on Dhamma alone, with mindfulness and wisdom as its two associates, joyfully searching and examining with thoroughness and circumspection to get to the causes and the results of the Dhamma truth which dwells within the *citta*."
>
> "The heart and Dhamma have the most intimate and close association together, so when the time comes that the body and its parts lose their strength and continue to deteriorate until they are abandoned and left to go their own way in accordance with the truth of what they are, if then one has circumspect mindfulness and wisdom in everything, both inwardly and outwardly, one is oneself entire and complete. Then there is no need to go

> and pick up and borrow what is called *"oneself"*, from the conventional relative world, which one puts on and wears, to become a "man of the world", which is the "way of the world" everywhere. Then one can let go of this burden — the *khandhas* — that one has struggled with and carried about all the time, by relaxing and letting them go their own way quite naturally. One lets the fundamental elements of the *khandhas* revert to their own natural state — *"anālayo"* — free from attachment. This is the "wealth" for whoever can do it and he will guard his "*Anālaya* treasure", and whatever his history has been, this will just be the end of it. Why then should he go about searching for things to get involved in any more, when they would only give rise to more trouble and confusion? For the truth is that the *kilesas* are at an end, for they have all been driven out of the heart, and since that moment all concerns have ceased."

This is how this *Ācariya* praised the virtues of living in forests and hills for one who has the same type of character and temperament as himself. He always gained calm and happiness of heart from the forests right up to the present time and he never became tired of them. This conforms to the teaching that the Lord Buddha laid down for Bhikkhus who have just been ordained, thus:

> "Go out and find a quiet and secluded place in the forest under the shade of a tree for instance, where you can strive to practise the way."

This Ācariya has the faculty of being able to know and see all sorts of things in the realms of the gods which the human eye cannot see, for example, the *Pretas,* Ghosts, *Devaputta, Devadhītā* and the *Nāga–kings*.[67] His way was very like that of Venerable Ajaan Mun, and whenever the opportunity arose they would talk Dhamma together about those beings who have subtle, *Deva,* bodies. It was wonderful to listen to and quite absorbing, so that one wanted them to keep on talking for a long time. It was even more worth while to hear when they talked about the *Devas* who came to listen to Dhamma talks and who asked questions, because both *Ācariya*s knew what the other was talking about without any danger of misunderstandings arising. This is much the same as

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67. *Preta:* beings who have much greed and who wander about full of discontent, searching for what they want and never finding it. *Devaputta*, *Devadhītā:* see footnote 66 on page 163. *Nāga:* serpent-like beings.

people who have learnt a particular branch of knowledge who can talk together about the subject without difficulty.

It seemed that this *Ācariya* was quite an expert in his understanding and knowledge of those who live in the realms of the *Devas.* When I asked him questions about these realms, he gave detailed answers which were wonderful to hear. Thus, for example, when asked about the *Nāga–kings,* he said that these *Nāga–kings* have great supernatural powers. When they came to see him they came in all sorts of different bodily forms *(kāya–nimitta),* and one time the *Ācariya* asked one of them to demonstrate his ability for him to see. The *Nāga* said that to produce bodily forms of various sorts is not difficult for the *Nāga–kings* and they can make the body appear in any form they want. Then he proceeded to display various different forms which the *Ācariya* saw right there. He told the *Ācariya* to just keep watching and he disappeared for a short while. Then the *Ācariya* saw a white-robed lay follower *(upāsaka)* walk up to him and when quite close this form suddenly disappeared, then he saw a hunter complete with his weapons come up close to him and disappear. After that a large elephant appeared coming towards him, and so on. The *Nāga* said that in whatever form he wanted to appear he could appear just as he wanted, whether it was that of an elephant, a person or anything else and he could do so almost instantaneously.

Concerning the *Nāga–kings* ability to release poison, the *Ācariya* said that once when he was wandering with Venerable Ajaan Mun near the Mekong river, in some places where they stayed there were ponds of clear clean water which should have been good for drinking and bathing. But Venerable Ajaan Mun would not let them use the water at all, for he was afraid that the *Nāga–kings* had ejected poison into the water and that if they used it for washing or drinking they would get sick with fever, making them generally unwell and increasing their difficulties. Ajaan Mun said:

> "This is because this group of *Nāga–kings* do not yet have any faith in or respect for us. They have been competing to gain superiority over us for several nights already, but before long their conceited views will die away, for they cannot stand against the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. This group of *Nāga–kings* still have no faith either in Buddhism or in us and they think that we have come here to contend with them and to drive them away from this place. This is why they have reacted by contending with us for several nights, but I am not interested in the way they react, for I have complete certainty

> that evil was never able to defeat virtue, and this Dhamma teaching, as with all others which the Lord proclaimed from the day of his first teachings to the time of his entering *Parinibbāna,* has never changed or altered. Because this is a 'Dhamma Truth', complete and perfect and cannot be altered."

This *Ācariya* knew what it was that Venerable Ajaan Mun was warning them about because he knew a lot about this group of *Nāgas* and had also talked with Venerable Ajaan Mun about them. But before long these *Nāgas* gave way and took the "Refuges" *(Saraṇa)* with Venerable Ajaan Mun, and they offered protection for the safety and convenience of the Bhikkhus, just as he had predicted. After the *Nāgas* had gained faith, submitted to Venerable Ajaan Mun and taken the refuges with him, he asked them saying:

> "Why did you release poison into the water which is of value to everyone, both people and animals? Were you not afraid of the evil *kamma* you would make when the water poisoned those who take it? For the *Nāga–kings* themselves must bear the responsibility for this evil, and there is absolutely no way to escape from it, this being the law of *kamma* as it has always been. Because the results of *kamma* have power beyond that of all the *Nāga–kings* everywhere, and if the *Nāga–kings* are afraid of evil, afraid of *kamma* and afraid of falling to hell, they should go and remove that poison from the water in those ponds and turn it into pure water as it was before. Neither I, nor any of the Bhikkhus, have touched that water so far, because I knew perfectly well that the *Nāga–kings* had deliberately put myself and all these Bhikkhus into the danger of drinking and using that water."

At this point the *Nāga–kings* submitted completely, for this was just what they had in fact done. They had not told Venerable Ajaan Mun anything about the poison but he knew of it from his own internal intuitive knowing *(ñāṇa)* and they admitted that what he said was true. After this they hurried to draw the poison out of the water in the ponds until there was none left, and then they came back quickly to tell Venerable Ajaan Mun. At the same time they invited him and all the Bhikkhus to use the water freely without any fear of danger. This is how the *Nāga–kings* who were conceited and contended for superiority with Venerable Ajaan Mun, turned round and submitted themselves to him completely. They also dedicated themselves as his followers, learning the Truths of Dhamma from him with enthusiasm and strong faith from then

on. As soon as Venerable Ajaan Mun knew that the *Nāgas* had given way and removed all the poison he told the Bhikkhus that they may use the water to drink and to wash in from then on.

Venerable Ajaan Mun considered this *Ācariya* to be very precise and thorough in his knowledge of subtle, mysterious things, such as the *Nāga–kings,* and it is hard to find any of his followers who could equal him. Venerable Ajaan Mun always taught the other Bhikkhus how they should behave in relation to those of the *Deva* realms. For instance, when they went to stay in some places, almost every day beings of the *Deva* realms would come late at night to hear Dhamma from him, when it was quiet and peaceful. He had to point out to the Bhikkhus that they should be careful of their behaviour and he told them to lie down and rest in the early part of the night. Once it had become late at night they should get up and get on with their striving for Dhamma so that when all the *Devas* come they will be able to salute and pay homage to us and to admire the zeal of these Bhikkhus, all of whom would be practising the way and doing their meditation practice when they come to visit us. We should not let them find us in an attitude of sleep, for it is lacking in mindfulness and is likely to give rise to unseemly mannerisms. The *Devas* often used to complain to Venerable Ajaan about Bhikkhus who were asleep and had no manners. But although it may not be possible for one who is asleep to have mindfulness to control his behaviour, it is within the ability of the Bhikkhus to avoid this by not lying down and sleeping at those times when the *Devas* usually come. Therefore Venerable Ajaan told them to rest and sleep before the time when the *Devas* come. The Bhikkhus then made an effort to do what Venerable Ajaan had told them and there were no more complaints from the *Devas.* As for any of the Bhikkhus who had the ability to receive the *Deva* guests, they would do so in the same way as Venerable Ajaan Mun did. But those who did not have this ability would go on practising their *samādhi* meditation when the *Devas* came.

The Way Devatās Liked Hearing Dhamma

Venerable Ajaan Mun and the foregoing *Ācariya* both said the same thing about the *Devatās* in that they have characters which are quite individual, in the same way that people do. Some of them liked to hear the *Dhammacakkapavattana*

Sutta, some the *Karaṇīyamettā Sutta,* some liked to hear the *Abhidhamma* — in other words *"Kusalā dhamma, akusalā dhammā..."* which the Lord Buddha taught to his Mother in the *Tāvatiṁsa* Heaven. Some liked to hear the *Aparihāniyadhamma Sutta* and some the *Mettābrahmavihāra Sutta,* in fact more of them wanted to hear this *Sutta* than any other. The different groups, levels and realms variously liked different *Suttas* depending on their individual characteristics and there were so many different ones which they asked to hear. However, I will not attempt to make a list of them, for I have not come across nor looked into all the *Suttas* which the *Devatās* wanted to hear, so I cannot let the reader know about them, and I must ask you to forgive me for this. But wherever this *Ācariya* went to stay in the hills and forests the *Devatās* always liked to go and associate with him in the same way as they did with his *Ācariya* — Venerable Ajaan Mun.

Sometimes the *Ācariya* stayed with the Rishi hermits who practised their way in caves in various locations far away from the turbulence of society, and generally four or five kilometres or more from the nearest village, and deep in the hills where nobody goes. For these Rishis do not have the tradition of going *piṇḍapāta* as the Bhikkhus do and they cook and eat their meals themselves, alone.

When the *Ācariya* went to stay there in a cave close by, he went to the Rishi for *piṇḍapāta,* and that day the Rishi cooked curried beans and gave them to him with great joy and gladness of heart. The manner in which this *Ācariya* related this story was very funny but we will not elaborate it here. The *Ācariya* said he was very hungry and tired having walked three days through wild country and he had eaten very little while travelling. For in walking through the forests and over hills he came across the occasional small village composed of only three or four houses where some forest dwellers lived who knew nothing about Buddhism, and he had to rely on those people to give him enough food to keep him going. So both because he had walked very far and also gone up and down many hills, his body was quite exhausted and he wanted food much more than was normal for him. So as soon as the Rishi had finished cooking the curried beans and given them to him he ate the lot until his bowl was clean, both the curried beans and the rice, for that day he left nothing, not even any bits sticking to his bowl. But having eaten, instead of feeling strength returning to his body, he felt increasingly weak and tired and he just wanted to lie down and sleep, for the food that the Rishi had given

him was quite delicious. Meanwhile the Rishi was very pleased and happy to see him eat all of it, for what he had done seemed to be absolutely suitable to the occasion, without any thought of the situation and what might come of it. As soon as the *Ācariya* saw that his condition was not good he went to a place where he could walk *caṅkama* and walked, until the afternoon after which he rested in meditation practice.

While he was sitting practising *samādhi,* his *citta* dropped into a state of calm and he heard the sound of gongs and drums of the *Devatās* who were expressing their appreciation for the fruits of *mettā* which they had received from the *Ācariya.* They were also glad about the gift of food which the Rishi had made to him when he was very hungry, for the merit and good which he had made was exceedingly great and beyond calculation. So these *Devatās* were overflowing with delight and thanksgiving *(anumodanā),* for it is very rare that a "holy" man, complete in moral behaviour and Dhamma who is worthy of respect and veneration and makes one glad at heart, should come and favour them. They were truly glad about the fruits which had come from him so they all came to express their satisfaction and thanksgiving and asked that they may share in this merit by their act of thanksgiving.

This was how the *Devatās* who lived round those hills all expressed their gladness at the gift which the Rishi had made through the *Ācariya* who had been so hungry and had eaten a lot. They came so that he should be a witness to their gladness and they also asked him to tell the Rishi about this and to express their thanks *(anumodanā)* to him. So early that evening, he took the opportunity to talk Dhamma with the Rishi, and speaking in an indirect manner he said:

> "This afternoon I dreamed that a great company of *Devatās* came beating gongs and drums to give thanks for the great merit which you made in giving food to me this morning, and they also asked for their share of merit which comes from the thanksgiving. You must have gained a lot of merit for all these *Devatās* to come and give thanks and to ask for a share in it as well."

Hearing this, the Rishi put his hands together and raised them above his head in appreciation and agreement with the *Devatās,* and he expressed his admiration of the *Ācariya,* saying:

"You must be very skilled in the ways of intuitive knowledge *(ñāṇa);* for if you were able to hear the sounds of the *Devatās* showing their appreciation by this thanksgiving while you were merely sleeping in the middle of the day, how much more skilled you must be at other times when you are not asleep. I have no doubt about this for I have had great reverence and faith in Venerable *Ācariya* since I first saw you, and for this reason I have done whatever I can for you gladly and willingly, so when I saw you eat a lot of that food my gladness and joy was boundless. Can you tell me where these *Devatās* live so that they were able to know that I had given food to you and then to make their thanksgiving, and also to ask for a share in the merit from me? And why have I never seen them display themselves all the time I have been living here?"

The *Ācariya* answered:

"These are the *Rukkha Devas* (*Devas* who dwell in trees) and they live not very far from us. This morning when I was doing the thanksgiving, *"Yathā... Sabbītiyo..."* they also heard it and responded with their *"Sādhu";* but if we are not aware of them it seems as if there are none of them anywhere around here at all."

The Rishi was very interested in the story of the *Devatās* coming to make thanksgiving for the *"dāna"* which he had given and asked the *Ācariya* to tell him more about it. The *Ācariya* then devised a way to get this Rishi to practise meditation, and also, so that he himself may have time for his own meditation practice without having external things coming to bother him too much. So he said to the Rishi:

"In order to see the *Pretas,* Ghosts, *Devaputtas* or *Devadhītā* you must look with the internal eye, the eye of the heart; and in order to be able to know all these other forms of existence with the internal eye you must be diligent in practising meditation. Examine the thirty two parts of the body in detail with wisdom. And when you do *samādhi* meditation practice, keep your attention on your breath, or on the word "Buddho", just that, and don't let it get caught up with anything else. When your *citta* becomes calm by either of these methods of meditation, you will be able to see the *Devatā* for yourself without having to bother other people by asking about them.

But if you are lazy in doing your meditation practice you will not see any *Devatās,* nor will your heart become calm and peaceful."

> "To see the *Devas,* who have *Deva*–bodies, you must see with the *Deva* heart — in other words, you must use *samādhi* meditation as the means of doing this. If one does not have the means of doing this, there is no way in which one can know or see the beings of these realms."

After giving this explanation, the Rishi felt eager to practise this way so that he may come to know and see the *Devatās.* Then this *Ācariya* took his leave and left him so that he could get on with his own practice. Late that night the *Devatās* came to visit him to ask about the Rishi and his desire to know where the *Devatās* lived, about his desire to practise meditation so as to know about the *Devatās* and also how the *Ācariya* had taught him. So the *Ācariya* then explained to them what he had taught the Rishi.

The *Ācariya* did not stay very long with the Rishi even though he had such great faith in this *Ācariya* and was also very attached to him and did not want him to go.

Once this Ācariya was staying in a certain place in the forest with two other Bhikkhus. Later on he heard from the villagers that close to where the Bhikkhus were staying, they had buried the body of a woman who had died in an abnormal way — the villagers called it a "violent death". This woman who lived in the forest was pregnant and she was ignorant of the necessary care and attention required in giving birth to a child and she was left to her own devices and died in a sorry state. This is what they told the *Ācariya,* but to start with, none of the Bhikkhus knew about this woman.

When the *Ācariya* practised his meditation, the ghost of this woman came to bother him nearly every night. He explained that as he understood it, ghosts and people have very similar characteristics in regard to the sexual cravings that exist in the hearts of all beings in the world. (The writer apologises for bringing in this subject matter, but it is necessary for understanding the true basis of what happened.) He said that he saw this quite clearly when he went to stay and practise meditation in that forest with the two other Bhikkhus. As soon as night had come, whenever he entered into meditation he would see

the ghost of this dead woman coming to him and displaying all the suggestive things of her sex to him all the time. But his *citta* was too strong for her and she could not do anything to overcome him. Sometimes this ghost appeared to become much more active than normal, almost as if it was going to try and rape him to satisfy her heart's craving, but she had no way to get at him. He developed *mettā* in his *citta* toward her but she would not accept it, for all she wanted was the satisfaction of this emotional state of craving *(ārammaṇa).* When he questioned this ghost, she answered quite truthfully without any deception, about how and why she had died, which was later confirmed by the villagers.

It was after this that she tried unsuccessfully to do these things to him that he asked her what had happened to her. She told him that when she was alive as a human being her marriage had broken up and her husband left her for someone else. This had upset her very badly and when the time came to deliver her child there was nobody to look after her and give her medical attention. It was then that she died with her child still unborn. This was the same story that the villagers later told him. In fact he asked the villagers about this ghost because of its improper behaviour and because he would always see it when he entered *samādhi.*

He said that this ghost was quite vicious. When it could not get its way with the *Ācariya* it turned its attention to the two other Bhikkhus by acting as if it would rape them while they were asleep. They shouted out in their sleep, so loud that he could hear clearly what they said:

> "You are a woman and I am a Bhikkhu, how can you expect me to act like a lay person — I don't want it — you must go away now quickly before you make worse *kamma* than you already have and go down to hell. Venerable Ajaan! Help me! This ghost of a woman is trying to rape me! Come quickly! Help!"

This is the kind of thing they were saying, but very loud, even though they were still asleep. Like someone shouting out something to let us know. The *Ācariya* who was just coming out of his meditation practice after contending with the ghost, turned his attention out beyond himself and heard these strange noises quite clearly. So he quickly went to the Bhikkhu who had called for help and woke him up. When he was asked what had happened, he said that in his sleep he saw a pregnant woman coming towards him as though she would rape him, and she would not listen whatever he said to her so he called to Venerable

Ajaan for help and he was woken just in time. The *Ācariya* said that he had never come across anything like this before and the whole incident was very strange. The two Bhikkhus both had the same kind of dream, but not on the same night. And both of them called for help to the *Ācariya* when they became afraid that the ghost would make them lose their chastity *(Brahmacariyā)* as Bhikkhus, and they called out loud and clearly. One night one of them called out, the next night the other one did the same thing and it went on like this. The *Ācariya* was also disturbed in his meditation practice, but the two other Bhikkhus were disturbed almost every night.

The *Ācariya* said that the problem with this kind of madness is that it will not let its obsessed victims give way and receive any of their share of blessings and *mettā*. They are so completely obsessed by their desire that they know no shame, which makes their thoughts go into strange and wrong ways, and this is the case quite regardless of their realm, world or form of existence. If such a shameless obsession should take possession of any being anywhere, that realm or world is bound to be of a nature similar to that in which the ghost of this woman lived and behaved in that way towards the Bhikkhus. I asked him:

> "When the ghost of that woman was acting in bad, improper ways, what did it actually do?"

The *Ācariya* replied in a manner as if he was still angry with the ghost:

> "Do you want me to display everything in detail to you — like a boat on dry land? What I have already told you is enough to make me want to bury my head in the ground and I cannot go and reveal everything like someone taking off all his clothes. I am not shameless like that ghost who can speak without any sense of what is seemly and proper; and is it not enough simply to use the word "rape"? What else should one say? Surely everyone should understand what that means quite clearly, whether it concerns a ghost or a human being."

I then asked another question:

> "Did the other two Bhikkhus not know about the ghost from their *samādhi* meditation? If so, why should this ghost go and bother them when it was time for sleep — when one wants no pleasure more than a good sleep?"

The *Ācariya* replied:

"They did not say whether they knew about it or not; all they did was to shout out in the middle of the night so that I could not stand it and had to go quickly to help them. When they woke and I asked them about it, all they said was that the ghost was trying to rape them."

"How long did you stay in that place?"

"We stayed there for several months and the reason why I decided to leave the place was because the other two Bhikkhus did not want to stay there. They said that they could not stand this ghost's persistent efforts to have its way with them, so we had to go elsewhere."

"Does not the ghost which caused all this trouble belong to the realm of *Pretas,* who should be capable of accepting shared merit *(puñña)?* Why then was it not glad to accept its share of merit when the merit of someone's good actions are shared out to other beings?"

"I really do not know what group of beings it belongs to, in fact all I know is that it acted only in its own mad way, having no interest in anything else at all."

After this he smiled and said further:

"I was sorry for the other two Bhikkhus who were still very young. They practised the way well and they were very intent on Dhamma, but they could not relax and stay there with an easy heart because of this thing which came to trouble them. At night they seemed to be very uneasy with thoughts of "*dukkha*" and desire in both of them. When it was time to sleep they both were afraid of the ghost and how it may harm them in the same way as it had already done so. So they did not want to go on staying there and we had to leave."

I asked:

"Does this sort of thing happen only to women, or can men also become like this when they die?"

The *Ācariya* replied:

"Let us just think in terms of sexual craving *(rāga–taṇhā),* which not only afflicts women, or men, or Bhikkhus or *Sāmaṇeras,* or *Pretas* and ghosts, or *Devaputtas* and *Devadhītās;* for it is the leader in bringing harm to all of them. It never readily submits to being the servant of anyone and so it does not accept that there is anybody over whom it cannot be the boss and cannot order them about, for it is the one that orders them about. Therefore both men and women are equally susceptible. But in regard to this incident, I merely related what happened without any thought of blaming or criticising women and saying that they alone were bad. For if the situation was reversed and a man acts badly; or his ghost should appear to any woman or to one who practises meditation acting in a way comparable to the incident which I related, she would be bound to talk about it in a similar manner. If anyone says that we, or they, speak in a disparaging way about the spirits *(viññāṇa)* of women or men, it will be no more than his own ideas which we cannot stop."

"As for sexual craving *(rāga–taṇhā),* we should not take much interest in how it effects the ghosts and *Pretas* and other such beings. It would only waste a lot of time to know what they are all like and how they react to it. We human beings are the clever ones, and clever enough as women and men also, and even though we may not display anything outwardly we are still clever internally. For instance, the difference between the way things were when I was young as compared with the way they are nowadays is enormous, as different as the sky and the earth. Look for yourself, there is no need to go and talk about it both outwardly and inwardly, for the change has taken place just due to this — sexual craving — and it has almost reached the point where the whole world is ablaze with it. Because when one person who is bold faced and brazen makes a point of showing off his cleverness in this direction, then other people pick up these ideas and they also show off their cleverness, and this spreads more and more. So the world becomes more disturbed every day, because there is nothing good or beneficial that comes from this senseless display of vanity. Under normal conditions sexual craving is volatile and rather like a dangerous object such as a weapon or poison which can harm and kill. But when they think of it as being fun and play with it and praise it as being artistic or modernistic, saying how good

it is, and then go and display it to the world its powerful influence will spread, because all of them have sexual craving in them, and it can cause the break-up and destruction of the world. Take a look for yourself! But if you don't believe it you can try it out. You will soon see for yourself quite clearly just how powerful its influence is. But there is no need to talk much or to look far away, for it is there to some extent in the hearts of almost everyone and it shows itself outwardly for us to see how malignant it is, quite obviously. But why then should people go and promote it so that it develops and becomes so powerful that it ruins themselves and destroys the world? This is why the wisest of men have always taught people to be very cautious of it and to restrain and overcome it. This will at least bring some peace and calm in those groups who do this, enough for them to relax and breathe freely."

"You asked me about this so I have talked about it, but please do not think that I am blaming or criticising anyone. For I also have been afflicted by it and have sought for it and roused it up enough in the past for me to know without doubt that if 'I'[68] should search for supreme happiness and satisfaction I must do so in quite another direction. Otherwise it would have kept whispering to me and dragging me down to hell all this time and every day for the rest of my life. Don't think that it will lead you to the peaceful Dhamma which is a state of calm and tranquillity. If you look for the baneful side of sexual craving you should be able to see it because in itself it is entirely baneful, and it also dwells within the hearts of each one of us. If then you are still unsure of it, what else can I say?"

The *Ācariya* said that the ghosts and *Devas* have the pretentious wiles and ways of sexual craving quite as much as human beings, but this is not so in all cases. There are some who are bold to the point where they display their sexual craving quite openly in the same way as people who are given to this sort of thing. Sometimes a *Deva* would make a display of enticing mannerisms and ways and even going as far as grabbing hold of the *Ācariya* saying that she loved him very much. Then he had to point out and explain the situation until she understood, after which she would not act in that way again. "But," he said:

"Going to the extent of grabbing hold of someone — this makes one think some! One should expect that beings in two different realms and states of existence would not be able to love and care for each other in the manner

68. The word 'I' is a translation of "the owner of this body".

> of emotional attachment *(ārammaṇa)*. But this showed me how sexual craving is no respecter of persons, for it can make attachments anywhere that there is the opportunity and the appropriate situation. When this sort of thing happens, my gross, physical body is not apparent and I feel no awareness of it. It is probably a *Deva* body that is known, seen and felt by the *Devas* and this is what arouses whatever it is in the heart of the *Devatā*. This reaches the point where she makes a display of her love openly without any shame — which is worse than the way of good people who have a proper sense of shame."

This kind of experience is often found amongst those who practise the way. But generally, they are not ready to talk about it to other people, except to those who also practise the way; or to someone whose character they know well and can trust; or to one who has come across such things.

Some of the Bhikkhus who go far away into the hills are likely to be protected by a Devatā who keeps close by him, although nobody is able to see this, although the Bhikkhu who the Devatā has become associated with can know about it. But they make no ostentatious show to spoil it, like people in the world who have gross physical bodies. For they come with good intentions, faith and respect, and with a genuine desire to do what is meritorious and virtuous for the Bhikkhus. There are times when such a Bhikkhu may fast for many days until his body becomes weak and exhausted although his heart is still strong and bright. The Devatā seeing this feels sorry for him and may want to give him some physical strength. So the Devatā asks permission to help him by giving him some Deva food. This Bhikkhu saw what he understood to be the Deva food in the hand of the Devatā, which she had brought with her. It looked like an off-white chalky powder, and this, the Devatā told him, was the food of all classes of Devas. The Devatā then asked if she could give him this food by rubbing it very lightly over his body so that the nutritive essence of this Deva food should permeate all parts of the body very quickly and give it strength, like one gets from eating ordinary food, or more so. The Bhikkhu felt that he should not give permission, for he was afraid that he may be breaking some of the rules of the Vinaya. Because it was already late in the afternoon and the Devatā was female and she had come on her own, and

if anyone should chance to see them,[69] they would at least criticise him even though it may not be a fault against the Vinaya. Even worse, they might think that she was a real person and blame him in the way of the world, saying that a Bhikkhu and a woman were living together in a cave in the desolate hills and there was no other man anywhere about to act as a chaperone. The Devatā who has a Deva body would then be taken for a woman who was making advances to a Bhikkhu. The whole thing may get blown up into a scandal which may cause a lot of damage and trouble, even though in fact there would be nothing between them which was not proper and pure.

With this reasoning he would not let the *Devatā* touch his body, not even to rub the *Deva* food over him. But the *Devatā* was insistent, saying that no harm would come from the association with a *Devatā* at all because the body of the *Devatā* is a *Deva* body and the food which she had brought to give him strength was *Deva* food and there is nothing in it which would contravene the *Vinaya* and cause him any trouble. As for seeing and hearing each other talking together, it is a case of the heart at the level of the *Devas* seeing a *Deva* body and the *Deva* hearing listening to *Deva* sounds, and it has no connection with the gross physical body, physical seeing and ears made of skin in any way that would be an obstacle to you and the *Vinaya* at all. The *Devatā* said that she had come to serve him and help him in the hope of making merit and developing her virtue through this Bhikkhu who was so resolute and intent on Dhamma, and that she had not come to harm him or Buddhism at all.

> "You should please have *mettā* and agree to let me have the share of the merit which I ought to get through you, and please do not reject this *Devatā* who is anxious to make merit so as to be a condition for the promotion of my future births and becoming; and to cause my development and gain in the present and future to increase by this good action."

The Bhikkhu replied by saying:

> "While you are here with me, whether I shut my eyes or open them, I can still see you. Other people have eyes and if they are not blind they can also see us sitting here. What do you think, would this be proper and in character for a woman, the two of us together like this? Please think well about it before doing anything."

69. There is a suggestion that this may include psychic seeing (clairvoyance).

"What you see here, you see with your heart and eyes which are supported by Dhamma, in other words, you have *samādhi* and *ñāṇa* which enable you to see easily and clearly," the *Devatā* explained.

"Even though you may use your physical eyes to see me, the seeing still comes from the internal *ñāṇa* which helps them and enables you to see as if your physical eyes were seeing. Because it is just your internal eye which enables the physical eyes to see *Deva* forms and if you did not have *ñāṇa* within you to aid your seeing you would never be able to see the *Deva* body of a *Devatā* at all. In order to give you confidence that you have no need to be afraid of anyone coming and spying on this *Devatā* who is sitting with you I can give you complete assurance that apart from yourself alone, even if people came here in thousands they would not be able to see me at all, not even one of them. I have the power to prevent the ordinary person from seeing me and this is not difficult for me to do. The only exceptions are those who have Dhamma within them, and *ñāṇa* which enables them to know, and for these people I have respect and reverence and I have no ability to prevent them knowing. But also, you should not think that this *Devatā* is a supernatural being who has come from some mysterious place, for I have come from the realm of human beings who love the way of moral behaviour, who love Dhamma and who are always glad to make merit and make gifts of whatever is appropriate and who have these qualities as their habitual nature. So whenever I come across anyone such as yourself who practises the way properly, I feel great faith and reverence and want to increase it, and however much or little I develop, it is all merit and virtue and becomes part of my conditioned characteristics. You should therefore agree and help me with *mettā* to do whatever is proper and right. I would not dare to do anything which is not allowable for a recluse, for good and bad arise from *kamma* — the actions which one does oneself — which I understand well and respect and I do not go against. But what I have been pleading for you to accept is entirely within the realm of Dhamma; it is not a matter of *Vinaya* and there is nothing of the way of the world in it. Like when you give Dhamma talks to us *Devatās,* it makes no difference as far as the Dhamma and *Vinaya* are concerned, whether there is only one person listening or however many listen."

The time when the *Devatā* and the Bhikkhu were talking to each other was the time when he was in *samādhi* practice and not at any other time. But when

he said to the *Devatā* that when she came and sat there with him, he could see her with his eyes closed or open, he was referring to other times in general when he was doing other things and he was still able to see and know such things by means of his own special ability. Therefore, the reasoning which the *Devatā* used in asking him to accept the *Deva* food was within the bounds of what is reasonable and proper, because it is limited entirely to the affairs of the heart (mind) which is in *samādhi* meditation. Where the Bhikkhu questioned the *Devatā* and they talked back and forth, all of this took place in *samādhi* and in accordance with Dhamma. But action done in the attained state of *samādhi (samādhi–samāpatti)* are not within the scope of faults against the *Vinaya* rules.

It seems that while this Bhikkhu was in *samādhi* that afternoon, the *Devatā* in fact rubbed this *Deva* food over his body. But the body which the *Devatā* rubbed was his body in *samādhi* and not his ordinary body. When the *Devatā* rubbed this food over him he felt much lighter than normal in *samādhi,* and when he came out of *samādhi* his body felt light and buoyant and much stronger than usual — as if he had eaten food that day.

This Bhikkhu said that some days he was able to see the *Devatā* all the time, without having to enter *samādhi.*

> But the seeing of *Devatās* in *samādhi* or with one's physical eyes at other times is always likely to be self-deception and false in someone who is just beginning to train themselves in the early stages of meditation. Therefore, even those who are naturally endowed with such abilities and may at times see various things must be cautioned by their *Ācariya,* who should insist that they do not let go and let the *citta* go out and get to know things in the way they have been used to doing this. They must wait until they have become sufficiently skilled at entering and leaving *samādhi,* and they understand what to do and how to react to the various things which are experienced, knowing well enough what is genuine and what is false. Then, when the time is appropriate to let go, they may do so to some extent, but not in the manner of letting go of all self-control and having no consideration for what is right and wrong, good and evil which may become involved with this type of *samādhi.*

Amongst those who practise meditation, there are some who see *Devatās* that come from their own delusions in this way, but if they are intent on Dhamma,

not proud and conceited in this ability, nor believing it to be something special in them, and they do not deludedly go after these things which they experience, then it is not difficult to cure. But what is difficult is the type of person who tends to be haughty and boastful. As soon as he comes across any of the above phenomena, one fears that it will become a chronic disease and he will not be the least interested in taking any "medicine" to effect a cure. Rather he would try to spread the germs so that the disease becomes widespread, causing harm and loss to others who do not know nor understand about these things, nor about their tricky deceptions; and this disease is a type which one should be very much on guard against. I am not a knower or seer of the *Devatās, Pretas,* ghosts and other such things, but if someone comes and talks about them in an effusive extravagant manner, without any "steering wheel and brakes" to retain some control I feel afraid and concerned. Because, generally speaking most people are susceptible to this "disease" and as soon as the "germs" of it enter their system, there is fear that it would spread and increase and get out of hand.

In order to combat this kind of disease effectively one must ask the help of someone who is an Ācariya and who understands well about this sort of thing, as well as the way of samādhi and wisdom and other things also. If anyone goes to him and talks just a little about this sort of thing, he will know immediately whether it is genuine or false, and he can point this out clearly and cure the trouble straight away, provided that this person is interested to listen for the sake of learning the truth of Dhamma and its ways. Then he will be able to practise the way rightly by following the *Ācariya* without losing anything at all. *But what is frightening is the way that some people grab hold of anything that comes and passes by them and then hold onto it as their "valuable possession, absolutely genuine and true", without considering whether it is really true or false.* This kind of "true thing" is then capable of causing endless disturbance and loss both to the person himself as well as to others, and because of this such "true things" are most frightening to those who have experienced them and gone beyond them. So those who practise the way should use mindfulness and wisdom to be well guarded against such things, and they must not let such "true things" as these be able to arise. This means that they will know all aspects of the way of practice with circumspection and they will be a blessing to themselves and to the whole field of Buddhism.

This Bhikkhu who had the *Devatā* coming to look after him could tell the most fascinating stories and I enjoyed listening to him. He talked of a time when he had gone for a period of meditation practice to a place where he was dependent on two or three families of farmers and every four or five days he would go *piṇḍapāta* to them and would eat one meal and that was all. But it seems that his meditation became progressively deeper without any slackening. He did his meditation both in the day and at night with equally good results, but it was rather hot during the day and at night it was cool and pleasant and the *citta* was able to go down into complete absorption in the realm of *samādhi,* and to remain there for several hours at a time before rising out of it. If he thought with sympathy of the *Devatās,* late at night he would withdraw from *samādhi* to some extent and look around. If he saw that some of them had come he would receive them for a while, then afterwards he would turn back towards *samādhi* again, as was his way, until the time came for him to withdraw from it. After that he would investigate and research with wisdom until he finished whatever he was investigating. The total time spent in *samādhi* at night was four to five hours each time whereas during the day it was from two to four hours, and in addition he would walk *caṅkama* after doing *samādhi* meditation. This was his regular routine, but he was not much interested in the amount of time which he spent, for the effort which he put into these various aspects of Dhamma were his chief concern. He said that whether he ate food or not he did not feel hungry, although there were some mild reactions from the body, but not enough to bother him and cause trouble. When the *Devatā* talked about him being hungry it was just her assumption. For himself, he had no concerns about being hungry because he was absorbed in the Dhamma which was in touch with his heart all the time — which was a more subtle nutrient than any other kind of food.

This Bhikkhu said that sometimes he could see the *Devatā* in the middle of the day sitting on a rock politely watching him about twenty yards or more from him. Sometimes in the middle of the day the *Devatā* would come up to him quite silently, as she did on the day when she came to ask permission to rub the *Deva* food over his body. At times he would see the *Devatā* who had come to sit only about four yards away from him. He could see her quite clearly as if he were using his physical eyes, but when he opened his eyes he could also see her just as clearly as when they were closed. At that time his *citta* was only slightly calmed down and he should not have been able to see

her. Because the *citta* which is going to receive guests from the *Deva* realms must normally be in a deeper state of calm than he was in then. Sometimes he felt strangely disorientated and he had to ask the *Devatā:*

> "Have you produced a gross bodily image *(nimitta)* now, like a human body for I can see you clearly both with my "heart's eye" and with my physical eyes, in the way I see other things in the world?"

The *Devatā* replied:

> "I can create a subtle body or a gross body without any difficulty at all."

> "And this image that I see, is it a gross body or a subtle body?"

> "This image is a gross body."

> "Then what if someone else should come here and see you?"

> "I have made myself visible to you alone as I told you earlier, you need not be afraid."

But this conversation took place via the heart and not at the level of ordinary speech.

The *Devatās* are able to recall their actions of past lives *(pubbenivāsa)* in the same way as those Bhikkhus who have the ability in this sort of thing. In this case the *Devatā* told this Bhikkhu all sorts of things about her past and the things she had done. But regretfully we must pass over this because I cannot remember all the things that happened.

The above account has been included here so that the reader may think about how the *citta* which has been continually taking on this or that form of body throughout endless past realms of existence and lives, never has any time when it can stop and rest from this however it twists and turns about.

But there are some people who deny this and say that death is the end and one is then annihilated. In one who believes this, annihilation and the truth which is that one is not annihilated, contradict each other in one and the

same person. But who is it that has to accept the results of his past actions, and who is it that gets the truth which is unalterable, coming back on him apart from the one who denied and the one who accepted the truth. There is nobody else to take on the results of each one's past — which are those of birth and death — for this is bound to be the destiny of beings in this world, each for itself. The happiness and suffering which each one has within the span of each life — between birth and death, is just the destiny of each one who is born and dies and who must accept it themselves. The words, or the opinion which says: "death is annihilation", or "death leads to rebirth", are not what will bear the result in place of oneself so that one can take heart and feel easy about making these assertions without any thought of what in fact is the truth of the matter.

The practice of training and developing the *citta (citta–bhāvanā)* is the way to get to know about oneself, and most especially to get to know about birth and death which are inherent in oneself. This is far better than any other methods for determining the truth of this matter, for other methods only tend to waste time without getting to the truth that convinces and makes one restrain one's heart from indulging in all sorts of wayward and playful thoughts which are pointless and cannot lead to the truth. The one that has to accept being born again after death is the heart; and conversely, the one that some say is annihilated after death is also the heart.

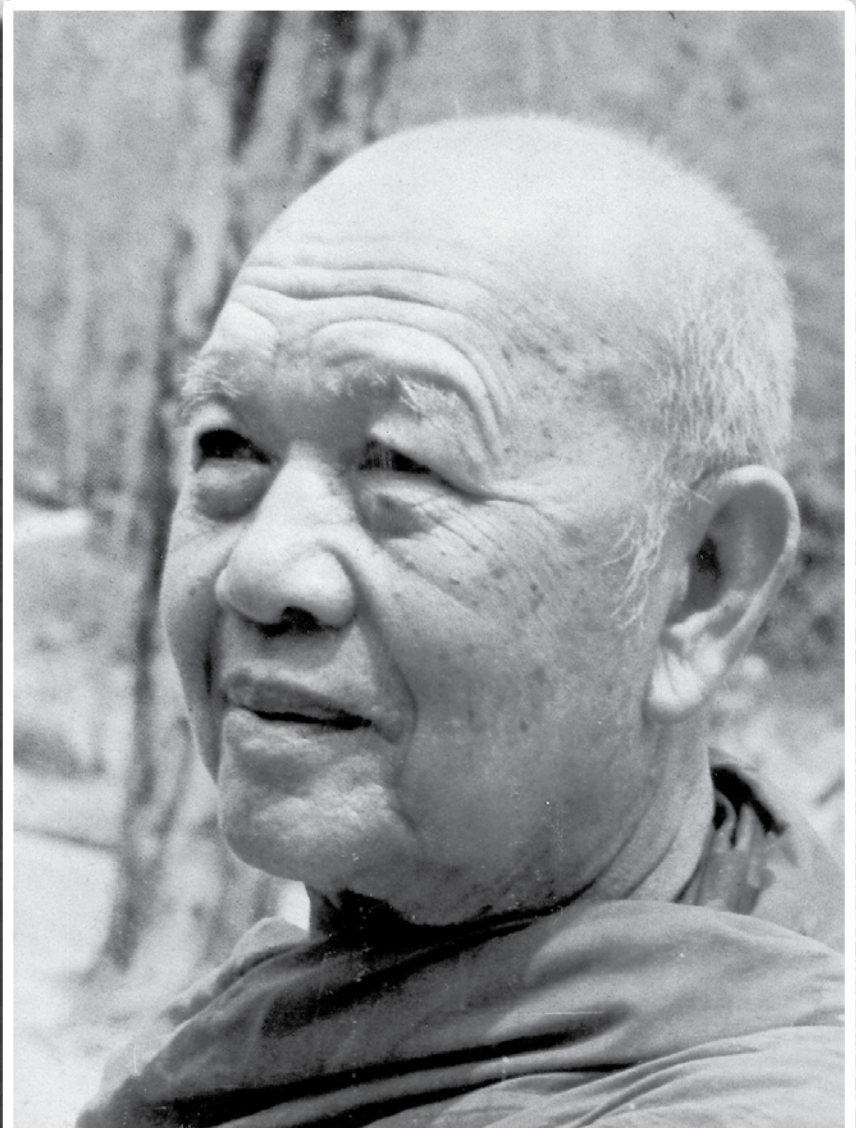
> This "heart" is the most recondite thing and quite different from all other things, and this ought to be verified by the way of *citta bhāvanā*, which is the best way to enable one to see with certainty what in fact happens. In doing this, the important thing is to get the *citta* to go down deeper and deeper steadily, until it reaches its original ground. Then one will be bound to know about oneself for sure, both about birth and about death and also about not being born and not dying, all of which are to be found in the sphere of this same heart. As for being annihilated when one dies, this is not to be found anywhere within this heart which goes touring about. Nor in the Dhamma of the Lord is there any mention of annihilation upon death to be found in the heart. When one practises *citta bhāvanā* one never comes across anything about the *citta* dying and being annihilated, for if one comes across anything at all it is always and only about death being followed by birth. If the *citta* gets to know

> all about itself it will come across "no-birth" and "no-death" within the *citta*. But never death and annihilation.

Yet there is that within us which vigorously denies this and it is not interested in searching for those causes which are there within each of us and which are proclaiming themselves openly all the time. The important thing here is that, if the heart, which is the leader, refuses to investigate the ways of those basic causes which it should get to know from itself, then even if thousands of people were to come and tell him the truth which they have known from their own experience of having seen it for themselves, they would still have no way to make him accept what they say. Or at least, not so that he will accept that truth in a way which leads him to improve and correct himself so that he becomes a rational person who can take up and hold onto what will be of increasing value to him. In the end he will probably become one who goes through birth and death time after time, defying himself and not looking any further than his present situation.

This is like a person who has a critical illness, who is not interested in thinking about himself so much as about his room in the hospital, the medicine which he must take, the doctors and the nurses and how they are no good and do not respond to his wishes, and he complains and moans and groans all the time disturbing other people as well, even though none of what he does is any use at all.

The account of the Bhikkhu who was visited by a *Devatā* and about his recollection of past lives has been told. The writer has also completed the discussion of life after death as against annihilation after death, and what has been written should be sufficient as a means of verification for those of us who still have doubts and uncertainty in regard to these two views which we should verify ourselves. Now we will go on to read of various other things.



Venerable Ajaan Fan

8

Bhikkhus of the "Modern Kind"

Generally, in the practice of the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who follow in the line from Venerable Ajaan Mun, they like to live in the forests and hills, as we have already said before. They do this in order to get away from disturbance so as to live at ease in doing the work of a recluse *(Samaṇa–Dhamma)* in their own time as they feel like it, without wasting time with other duties which are not really necessary. *In particular, the Lord said that construction work and building projects are an enemy and detrimental to the work of a recluse. This is recorded in the Mahā Khandhaka Vinaya, in connection with the way of development for a Bhikkhu who is just at the beginning and who has not yet gained any firm principle in his heart nor reached any level of attainment. In this, the Lord teaches that such a Bhikkhu should turn away from such works and go quickly to find a place to stay which is quiet and secluded.* Thus, for instance, he should not go and stay near a boat landing place where there are often crowds of people, nor in a monastery where they are doing building or repair work. One should reflect on how, if one has a small wound it should heal quite quickly with the right treatment, but when it is left open and comes into contact with all sorts of things all the time, it will probably get worse even if one tries to protect it. *The heart is like such a wound which needs to be looked after and which can get worse when it comes into contact with all sorts of things all the time.*

In fact, this is true, not only for the *citta* which is just beginning the training, but also for one that has trained for a long time but has still not attained enough controlling principle[70] so that he can feel some confidence — or feel absolutely confident — for there is still the possibility that he may get worse. This is like a fresh wound, or an old wound, respectively, which he does not take care of. So "taking care of", and "looking after" are the ways of being heedful, both for those who are just beginning the training and also for those

70. In other words the practical training has not yet gone deep enough to effectively control the heart and protect it against deleterious influences.

who have been training for a long time. One must not think that one is well experienced in the ways of *Kammaṭṭhāna* and that one is adept at it just because one has done it for a long time and that one is able to go anywhere and live anywhere. To think like this is to be imprudent and careless. Or, as some would say, "imprudent to the point of being shameless", and they are probably right. Because whether one has been training for a long time, or not, is not nearly so important as having a firmly established controlling principle in one's heart, which is the aim of the Dhamma Teaching that has been handed down to us.

> Therefore in this present age, Venerable Ajaan Mun taught all his followers most emphatically about the importance of a quiet place for *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* of his lineage; and also how they should not become an *"Ācariya"* teaching others before they have become an *"Ācariya"* to teach themselves in the first place, so that the heart of each one shall have gained a firm controlling principle which is able to look after and protect himself. Then, wherever he goes he will be of no danger to himself nor harmful to others. As for being of value to others, this will follow on naturally when such a person who practises the way has a ground or basis of Dhamma which is sufficient — or which is completely fulfilled, accordingly.

To begin with one's teaching must be to oneself — almost as if one does not let oneself look at anyone else, but only at the right and wrong, and good and evil of oneself, as well as teaching oneself to be cautious of things which harm the *citta* in indirect ways. This means all those things which make trouble and difficulties or which cause worry to oneself because of having to organise this or build that, for this is the kind of work that people in the world do everyday. This is not the kind of work that should be important for *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* whose aim is that of attaining freedom while they are still at the stage of "walking on" and teaching themselves. For their interest should be in *bhāvanā* so as to look at their own *kilesas* (defilements) and to see the conceit and self-opinion that they have. Rather than going about increasing their worldly ways by looking for gross burdensome pursuits to take up and get involved in, until they become a "narcotic drug" in the heart. Then one cannot live in peace but must always be arranging this or building that, otherwise the *kilesas* cause one trouble. Which means that one has to exercise them in doing this business or that job, sufficient to act as an object of attention and interest which it can

depend on for the time being. Having finished they again cause trouble, until once again one must exercise them and this goes on all the time without ever reaching any satisfactory solution.

At first one thinks of doing such work to overcome one's restless irritability and that one cannot live without doing such works. But in the end these works become increasingly burdensome until they actually tend to make the irritability worse. They become things which disturb both oneself and others, causing turbulence in all, like mud stirred up in water. Because those who practise the way have taken up this path to cure their *kilesas* and to attain calm and happiness both for themselves and other people everywhere. Therefore, so that the *kilesas* can gain heart they like to make their owners take them out and exercise them in the foregoing way until there is no time to rest and relax and get into a state of calm at all; and they like it even better if those who practise the way come to have no routine practices left which are regularly done as a basic discipline.

When Venerable Ajaan Mun was emphatically teaching Dhamma in a manner which went to the heart, he was very afraid that it would not reach the hearts of we who were listening and who were inclined to go in the opposite direction to him. This he pointed out in ways such as:

> "If any of you who practise the way want to surpass the teaching of this foolish old man, then go and do so. When you have attained the highest Dhamma using your methods, then please come and help this old man so that he can see the sky and the earth with you, for this old man just dwells in the forest practising meditation by closing his ears and eyes without looking at the moon, the stars and the world of *saṁsāra* to see how it is developing and deteriorating. Anyone who wants development and progress in the modern way must use modern ways. But this old Bhikkhu has not yet got the wisdom to find out how to use these modern ways, and so he holds on to the methods of using the old *Dhutanga* practices which the Lord Buddha gave us, to be used according to the needs of each person. But others always want to come and be a nuisance, disturbing him all the time and not allowing him to relax even for a short time. And when they come, instead of using whatever mindfulness and wisdom they have to keep a close watch on the routine

methods of practice and taking them up as their way to develop, they turn about and become modern Bhikkhus taking a short cut to get rid of their *kilesas* by indulging in business and works of various kinds so as to show off to the world that: 'I have ability and talents.' But are they talents *(vāsanā)?* In fact they seem to be nothing but *kilesas* which bind and tangle them up until they cannot find any time to live in peace and happiness, not even for brief periods. All they have is emotionally bound involvements *(ārammaṇa)* which drag them this way and that until they cannot sit still. Are these the talents of a practising Bhikkhu? I'm foolish and I don't know what kinds of talents these are, nor how those talents should be promoted so that they may be the right way for a Bhikkhu who practises. And how then does the work of a Bhikkhu who practises with the highest aim and ideal of attaining salvation differ from other work as done elsewhere in the world? And why do they like all the troublesome involvement in the world, yet do not see what it's all about. As for myself, I am still alive and I can see the way it has gone already, and how will it be when I am dead? Even though I am very foolish and ignorant, I know what will happen and how it is going to be from the way things are happening now in the field of those who practise."

"In addition, these Bhikkhus, once they go away from here, they wander about boasting to the world that they are followers of Venerable Ajaan Mun — followers of Venerable Ajaan Mun who never have time to shut their mouths, until other people are tired of hearing them; and it is significant that Venerable Ajaan Mun is a forest Bhikkhu, whereas most of his followers are Bhikkhus of the modern type. This is where it will decay and decompose until it loses all form due to the boastfulness and 'sales talk' of Ajaan Mun's followers. This is why I am concerned about my Bhikkhus who act and behave in ways that are unusual and abnormal, setting up their teacher like food for sale in front of a shop. To begin with, this leads people to the false belief that these Bhikkhus are the *Ācariya's* followers, without understanding that they are the type of followers who are parasites and who, in an occult way, 'suck his blood', as well as that of other people in general. Secondly, it makes people tired and fed up with hearing their self-advertisements, boasting of all the things they have done, and fed up with the endless trouble and nuisance which they become in all sorts of ways. All of this is what leads to their own

> destruction, as well as to the destruction of their *Ācariya*, the circle of those who practise the way and Buddhism, causing it to become lost with everything else. A vision *(nimitta)* which I saw in my meditation practice, of Bhikkhus running about back and forth in front of me and behind me, which is to be interpreted as showing the shameless arrogance of those practising Bhikkhus who are lacking in moral shame and moral fear *(Hiri–Ottappa–Dhamma)* in their hearts, is now coming into being for me to see quite clearly all the time — even while I am still alive. After I am dead, whoever has the 'stripes of the tiger' or the 'spots of the leopard' concealed within them are then bound to display them as much as they can. For they have already begun to sell themselves and their teacher to some extent, in various ways which depend on the colour of their 'stripes or spots'. This is an indication which can be clearly seen in the present, of the harm which they will do in the future."

He further emphasised this theme, saying:

> "If there is anyone here at present who wants to be clever and bold-faced in a shameless way even while still staying with me, please say so! I will set you up as the 'great teacher' of the way of practice right now — even though you are still full of stupidity. But I want to let the others admire you as a thoroughly clever person to satisfy your desire, so you must speak out now! A skilled and clever person is rarely found and I would like to meet one, for I would be sorry to die without having this opportunity. Therefore I want to meet you now, while I am still alive."

This is how Venerable Ajaan Mun could be truly forceful, strong and acerbic when he wanted to be and those who heard it would sweat profusely as they felt hotter than fire. But for those who listened with interest in learning the way of Dhamma and who were truly intent on the way of practice, the more forceful it was, the more their hearts submitted to it, the more they accepted it and the more cool they felt. This was very different from those times when he taught Dhamma in the usual way.

The foregoing was written so that the reader may get an idea of what Venerable Ajaan Mun was like, both when he was benign, when he was acerbic and in various other aspects of his character, as well as that of his followers. Some

people may think that his followers were all good, like their teacher, but in truth they are mixed, some good and some bad, like parents may have many children, some good and some bad mixed together. The followers of Venerable Ajaan Mun had *kilesas,* so there may well be that which is good, unavoidably mixed up with that which is blameworthy. To look and examine well in all situations both externally and internally and to act accordingly is the right way of being circumspect in Dhamma. It is also a boon and blessing to that person in particular, and afterwards to others who accept what he says.

Some things which Venerable Ajaan Mun taught exclusively to the circle of those who practise, and special aspects of Dhamma which he taught in a forceful, provocative manner, are not suitable for inclusion in this book. But I have the bad and perverse tendency to like those talks which are more forceful and provocative than usual, because they go straight to the heart, which dwells deep down and does not like to rise to the surface to show itself nor to accept the Dhamma teaching easily. But when the heart does rise to the surface to accept Dhamma, even though it may be forceful and provocative, it is prepared to put up with it. Therefore, a sample of this kind of talk was included above for those readers who have similar temperaments to the writer, and who may be aroused by it to think in ways that will be of some value to them. If however the reader feels that it was inappropriate then I ask for your forgiveness. But normally, Dhamma has many facets and it may be profound or simple, and gross or subtle. So the teaching of Dhamma should be of various types to correspond with the different facets of Dhamma, so that those who receive it and who have various different characters may choose the type that fits them best. What is written in this book has also been done with this same principle in mind so that the reader may choose what he likes to bring him some benefit. As for me, I am doing the best I can to assure that all who read this book shall gain something of value from it.

9

About Beings in the Realm of Ghosts

We must return once again to the story of Venerable Ajaan Chob which is not yet finished.[71]

At one time he was staying in a cave in the province of Chiang Mai and it seems that it was very favourable for his practice of Dhamma. While there he experienced all sorts of things both internally and externally, much more than before and much more extensively and quite different from everywhere else he had been. He soon saw that this was a good opportunity for him to progress, so he stayed on doing his practice there for many months.

His investigation of Dhamma was good and clear both by day and by night, the weather was good and the cave was open with a good flow of air through it all the time, so he had no problems with external conditions which were comfortably cool and constant. But in that place there was something which he felt was unusual in connection with *samādhi bhāvanā.* When he did some investigation within his heart it became calm in a very subtle way, and when he came out of *samādhi* to go the way of developing wisdom, it was nimble and skilful without any fumbling, groping and sluggishness, which are signs that laziness has crept in.

He said that while he was there he was constantly visited by *Devatās* from many different levels and places, both high and low, but he considered that this was quite normal. What was unusual was the large number of ghosts that were moving house with their families from various districts in the Northeast of Thailand and going to settle in the hills of the province of Chiang Mai. Some were riding on horses or cattle holding their children and belongings, and moving their families, passing by in front of the place where he was staying.

As soon as they came close to where he was staying, the leader of the group would bring all his followers to pay respect to the *Ācariya.* He asked

71. Ajaan Chob was the foremost of Venerable Ajaan Mun's followers in knowing the various realms of existence. Therefore, the author talks of his story once again to illustrate the nature of the realm of ghosts.

them why these ghosts were all moving like this. They replied that they were moving their families and relatives from their village — they told him the name of the village — and they were going to a hill, which they named, in the province of Chiang Mai. They also told him that where they had come from there was little food, conditions were very difficult and other ghosts had no sense of morality *(Sīla–Dhamma).* All the time they were robbing, plundering and killing each other. As ghosts have characteristics that are very like human beings, they become ghosts without any moral sense by following the ways of people. They tormented and harmed each other in the same way as people were doing, causing trouble and confusion so that it was not peaceful like it used to be. Then they heard from relatives who came to visit them, that here in Chiang Mai one can find happiness for the moral behaviour of the people is better than elsewhere. They also heard that there were other beings living in the district of Chiang Mai who were similar to themselves and who were unknown and unrecognised by human beings, and that they were also well imbued with moral behaviour and had more peace and happiness than elsewhere. Therefore they decided to move there following the advice of their relatives (one must understand that their relatives were also ghosts). The *Ācariya* asked their leader:

> "When you say that conditions are difficult and there is little food, how is this since you do not depend on rice, fish and other foods, nor on housing, clothing and other things connected with living and eating, as people do. For these are what would make you work with hardship to plant and build things, as well as providing the conditions for those who make trouble by thieving and plundering from each other, as happens in the world of people?"

The leader replied:

> "As long as one is a being who has the results of *kamma (vipāka)* attached to oneself, wherever one is born and lives one always has results of *kamma* to support and help one, and to bring one trouble and suffering, in the same way as it does with all other beings. Whether one is born with a material body or any other kind of body is not so important, for what really matters is whether one is endowed with good or evil *kamma.* One takes birth and goes to live in some form of existence in a particular place and it is this one himself who lives there just for the happiness and suffering which he is

destined to experience. Therefore, to be in want, and to have plenty, are both found in beings who have good and evil *kamma,* but how strong or weak they are depends on the background of each individual."

The *Ācariya* then asked him:

"When you said that some ghosts have *Sīla–Dhamma* (a moral basis) and some do not, how is this? Do you mean that ghosts know the meaning of *Sīla–Dhamma* in the same way that people do?"

The leader replied saying:

"*Sīla–Dhamma* is a universal thing, it is not only found in human beings, but everywhere. The virtue and happiness in this principle of nature, is known by beings everywhere in the world, but they may or may not have a name for it, because the name is not so important as the nature of it which all beings like and are bound to depend on. That 'virtue' is in fact *Sīla–Dhamma,* and the happiness that arises from that virtue is also an aspect of *Sīla–Dhamma.* But they are different in that the former is causal and the latter is resultant. In saying that ghosts have *Sīla–Dhamma,* I mean of course, those ghosts who have good characteristics and whose behaviour towards the other ghosts is good. And also, in saying that ghosts do not have *Sīla–Dhamma,* I mean those ghosts who are not good and who have bad characteristics, and whose behaviour towards the others is not good. This is much the same as people who are good and bad, and it shows up in their different forms of behaviour respectively. Therefore wherever *Sīla–Dhamma* is found, it is peaceful, and wherever it is lacking, there is trouble."

"What does it mean when you talk about your relatives, and since when have you been relatives to each other?"

"The relatives of ghosts and the relatives of people are the same. In other words, previously when we were humans we were related together as brothers and sisters and so on, and we were close together and had a high regard for each other in the way people do. Then, when we died we all came back to birth as ghosts, and we can clearly remember each other so we have been inseparable blood relatives ever since we were human beings and will

remain so until *kamma* separates us, causing us to be born elsewhere so that we have no way to remember each other."

"When you live here in Chiang Mai, won't you be thinking of your old home with longing, in the same way as people get homesick when they move to another district?"

"There is nothing to long for, because ghosts do not have farms and homes like people. All we have are a few subtle personal possessions which we carry with us, so there is nothing to long for."

"Why do you carry these baskets and things along with you to clutter you up; and why do you bring these horses and cows? Wouldn't it be better to leave them behind?"

"Those things which are useful to ghosts and those things which make up their wealth are bound to cause attachment in ghosts. Or, to put it another way, there is no real difference between the results of *kamma* in ghosts and in people, nor between that which makes up the wealth of ghosts and of people when either of them have *kamma*–results inherently with them."

"Where you lived before, and where you are going to live in the Chiang Mai district, are you all bound to have houses to live in and friends about the place, or do some of you live differently?"

"We are bound to have houses, children, relatives and friends in the same way as people and other beings do. Because we are beings of one kind in the same way as all others, but our bodies are not visible to human eyes and the eyes of some other beings. Although we are quite visible to those who have *Deva* bodies, and we all have happiness and suffering in the same way, because the hearts of the ghosts and the hearts of all other beings have *kamma* and the results of *kamma* in the same way. So that wherever one is born, whatever type of birth one has and wherever one lives, one must experience the results of *kamma* in the same way as all other beings."

The *Ācariya* said that when he saw these ghosts moving their families, husbands, wives, children and relatives going by in large numbers, they were in no way different from human beings when they move their family to a new home.

They gave the same kind of impression of being loaded down with all sorts of things which they were carrying along with them, outwardly showing their suffering, anxiety and unhappiness. Just like people moving home and also like some other creatures such as ants carrying their eggs from one home to another. It made him think of the Dhamma aphorism, where it says:

> "*Kamma* disposes of beings in many different ways so that they experience different things in accordance with the results of the *kamma* which they have done. In whatever state and wherever they are born they come under the overruling influence of their good and evil *kamma,* as also does their *sukha* and *dukkha* and there are no exceptions to the law of *kamma* at all. Those who do good will be rewarded by the result of happiness, and those who do evil will get the result of suffering *(dukkha).*"

The two principles of happiness and suffering are to be found in beings everywhere regardless of their form of birth. The only difference is that they are more gross or more subtle, depending on how gross or subtle the bodily form is. Or to put it briefly, this is just the bodily home of our happiness and suffering. *Therefore one should not get so excited about birth, which has an equal status with death. For one who does not want to die but desires to take birth in various different forms, is in fact desiring nothing but death.* The *Ācariya* said:

> "I have thought about these ghosts and the various *Devas* that I have met and seen, and compared their situation with my own and with that of other beings generally, until I came to understand quite clearly that all are enmeshed in this mass of *Dukkha* together. Like a lot of animals of various kinds which have all been confined together in one place. It made me very sorrowful about the condition of birth and death under which we and all other beings live, never knowing if or when we will be able to get free from them. And the more I came across such things, the more it made me diligent in the practice of *citta bhāvanā* for the demolition of the *kilesas* which lead one on to ever more becoming and birth. For existence, or birth, is what sets up the immediate conditions for suffering. *Therefore, one who wants to attain complete and perfect happiness should not at the same time desire birth, which contradicts and opposes this aim. For in fact it is the erasing of the seed of this tendency from the heart which is true, complete and perfect happiness."*

He said further that he not only knew about the *Pretas,* ghosts, *Devaputta* and *Devatā,* but:

> "Even Venerable Ajaan Mun who has already reached *Parinibbāna,* came regularly with *mettā,* to visit me and explain Dhamma. Generally the teaching which Venerable Ajaan Mun gave me laid great stress on not being negligent, and doing this by rousing up mindfulness as the assurance that one is being diligent. He said that one who has present mindfulness in any position or situation, not only when practising meditation for *samādhi* or walking *caṅkama,* is in fact being diligent, because the presence of mindfulness means that he is being diligent. Mindfulness is the acknowledging Dhamma, the Dhamma of withstanding or putting up with hardships, the fighting Dhamma, the Dhamma of evading the enemies attacks, as used in fighting, and the Dhamma of advancing, fearless of death in the battle between the *citta* and the *kilesas.* But if mindfulness is the *only* thing that is lacking one will lose."
>
> "This is what Venerable Ajaan Mun taught so one who practises must develop mindfulness, and it ought to be present with Dhamma at every stage and level of the *citta.* What he taught me was:
>
> 'Regardless of whether one is just beginning the training, whether the *citta* has achieved *samādhi,* whether one is just beginning the training for wisdom, one has developed wisdom or one has reached a stage of skilfulness and penetration in the use of wisdom, in all cases mindfulness is a necessity with Dhamma at all levels. Mindfulness should never be confined to a limited field of activity with the idea that one should have it present in those circumstances as a necessary minimum — or that so much is the maximum that is necessary. But one should promote mindfulness until it becomes firmly entrenched and becomes *"Mahā–sati"*[72] — and this is the way it should be — because mindfulness is a very important Dhamma in this work, and one in which those who practise should take the greatest interest. Regardless of what one is doing, whether internal or external, gross or subtle, *mindfulness is an essential Dhamma which should be present and which should permeate everything that one does.* In *samādhi* at every stage and in wisdom at every level, mindfulness must be present as a guardian continu-

72. *Mahā–sati:* Great *Sati,* meaning that the training has gone so far that mindfulness is automatic and has become an ingrained habit.

ally. If mindfulness is lacking, more is lacking than would be the case if one lacked in all other forms of work and did not do them. So one may do work or not, but one should never let mindfulness be absent from oneself, from one's heart. *Anyone who endeavours to develop mindfulness relentlessly is bound to clear obstructions from his path and to walk on until he gains success regardless of how thick the kilesas are within his heart.* This means that *samādhi* and wisdom at every level will arise and be able to gain strength due to the overpowering influence of mindfulness — that which gives them sustenance — and this is absolutely certain. The way which leads progressively from the beginning onward until it reaches the state of freedom *(vimutti)* of *Nibbāna* is the way of mindfulness and it is this that supports them. If those who would develop calm *(samatha)* or insight *(vipassanā)* at all levels lack mindfulness, their calm and insight have no way that they can develop at all. From the beginning of the practice, right up to the end of the way, I have never seen any Dhamma which is so remarkable and which goes so deeply into the heart as mindfulness. Mindfulness is a guardian, a sustenance, and a prophylactic or preventive remedy which protects *samādhi* and wisdom at all levels — and these two Dhammas *(samādhi* and *paññā)* can only develop and reach their fulfilment if they are associated with mindfulness to promote and look after them — which can never take place if mindfulness is absent. You must listen well to what I say, take it to heart, grasp hold of it and never let the following be forgotten in a cloud of delusion, that: *mindfulness is a deep well of great strength in every aspect of striving in the way of Dhamma. Before one can alter or change one's thoughts or views in any way, they must be subjected to mindfulness, and whether they are gross or subtle and at whatever level of Dhamma one must have mindfulness which is one of the most important things in the field of Dhamma practice.'*

'With regard to wisdom, when the time has come to use thought for research, one must do so to the maximum of one's ability without holding back one's strength for fear that wisdom will "overflow". If one always has mindfulness to control wisdom in every aspect of investigating or research, wisdom will not be able to overflow and become trivial nonsense. The reason why wisdom becomes like water overflowing until one is unable to intervene and stop it, is because there is a lack of mindfulness to control it. Then it turns into discursive thought based on memory *(saññā)*,[73] until

73. *Saññā:* in recent works on Buddhism in English, *saññā* is usually translated as perception. But in Thailand it is universally translated as "memory" amongst those who practise *kammaṭṭhāna*.

finally one can find no truth in it at all. But wisdom which has mindfulness as a companion is sure to walk up towards the stage of *Mahā–paññā* (Great wisdom) in a way that one would not expect.'

> 'Once the heart has *Mahā–sati* and *Mahā–paññā* as its companions, then even though the *kilesas* may be thicker than a mountain, they will not be able to withstand their own destruction being brought about by the power of these two — *"Mahā–sati"* and *"Mahā–paññā"*. When one is working to develop the way, one should not pay attention to time, place or anything else more than one pays attention with mindfulness to the *citta* or the events that arise and cease in the *citta,* while investigating them with wisdom. This is the way to freedom from *dukkha* of all kinds which is here within one and not dependent on place, age or time.'

'But the search for a secluded peaceful place to act as a suitable battlefield where one may gain victory is the right way of Dhamma. Although one must not be so concerned about it that it becomes an obsession and changes into a self-made obstacle due to one's anxiety to find a place. One should just go on searching until one has found a suitable place that is satisfactory enough. Having found a place one should set up mindfulness and think with wisdom at the same time without wasting any more time.'

> 'The Four *Satipaṭṭhānas* and the Four Noble Truths *(Sacca–Dhamma)* are the battleground, and in that battleground one must throw in the utmost of one's mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort. Don't doubt that the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* are to be found anywhere but within the field of these Four *Satipaṭṭhānas* and the Four Noble Truths. These are the unshakeable Dhammas which have guaranteed the Path and Fruition through the ages since the beginningless past, and they are still the Dhammas which give complete and perfect assurance of the Path and Fruition at all levels without any shortcomings.'

'Any shortcomings and inability to reach the goal are to be found within the mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort of each individual and not in the aforementioned Dhammas which are unshakeable and have always been there to give assurance. So you must set your heart firmly on the Path and Fruition by digging down and searching in the Four *Satipaṭṭhānas* or the Four

Noble Truths with the utmost of whatever wisdom you have. Then one day in the future you will certainly be one of those who bestow the Path and Fruition on yourself through your skill and in the most unexpected way, a way that one could never have foreseen.'

'This explanation that I have given is a summary of the Path and Fruition which cannot be found elsewhere. You must try and follow it! You must get rid of all doubt concerning "the essential nature" *(aṅga)* of the Teacher (the *Sāsadā*: i.e., the Buddha), of the Dhamma and of the *Sangha,* as well as that of your Teacher *(Gurū–Ācariya)* whom the world claims has "entered *Nibbāna*" already.'[74]

'That which is called *"Nibbāna"* is not where the "world" thinks or believes it to be. Where it is actually located, the "world" is quite unable to guess. But where it is, there you will see *Nibbāna,* the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, the *Sangha,* the Teacher, and also yourself right there; and then all doubts and uncertainties of all kinds will disappear. And where is that place? That place is the Four *Satipaṭṭhānas* and the Four Noble Truths together with the heart that has *Mahā–sati* and *Mahā–paññā* digging and searching in detail all round, until everything becomes Dhamma and absolutely true in every part, without any false knowledge and understanding remaining in those Four *Satipaṭṭhānas* and Four Noble Truths at all. Then each of them is true and real; in other words, the Four *Satipaṭṭhānas* are true, the Four Noble Truths are true, and the heart is true with wisdom. This is freedom *(vimutti)!* This is *Nibbāna!* This is the dwelling place of the Great Teachers (Buddhas), the Dhamma, the *Sangha,* and those *Ācariyas* who have attained the state of Purity!'

'But once again, where is this place? It is where all anxiety and worry are at an end, where all becoming and birth are let go of, where all *dukkha* is let go of. You let go of them, all of them, right there. So you must endeavour to develop the way of practice for this "letting go" in that place. You must not indulge in speculation and guesswork which only wastes time and makes you tired in vain. Because that Dhamma is not a Dhamma of speculation or guesswork but the true Dhamma of whoever truly does the practices which the Lord laid down. That person will reach and attain the true Dhamma without having to do any guesswork at all.'"

74. This would of course refer to Venerable Ajaan Mun himself who had already died and who, in the popular imagination, had "entered *Nibbāna*" already.

When Venerable Ajaan Mun had finished his teaching out of *mettā,* this *Ācariya* prostrated to him within his *samādhi bhāvanā,* then Venerable Ajaan Mun just moved a little bit and immediately disappeared. This time he did not come by flying through the sky and when he went it was immediate. This *Ācariya* said that he could never predict with any certainty what *nimitta* he would get for Venerable Ajaan Mun, for sometimes he would come and go as if flying through the air, whereas at other times he would come walking like a normal person, and go in the same way, but his appearance was the same as it had been before he died without any noticeable differences. In fact, he said, that every time he came to teach, his appearance was always the same and he came quite regularly out of *mettā* to teach him.

This Ācariya is endowed with a rather strange destiny of which the most outstanding features are his tendency to like living in the hills and forests and to wander about on his own, and his liking for eventful encounters of various kinds, such as with tigers. Even when he came out of the forests and met up with other Bhikkhus and friends, it was only for a short while before he returned to the forest again. But despite these tendencies, he has lived his life in safety without anything doing him any harm.

At one time, in the middle of the day he was resting in a small hut while staying in a Wat. On that day it happened that his Mother came unexpectedly to the Wat, and she went to his hut and called to him:

> "Come quickly to the *sālā* (meeting hall) because just now Lady Madrī is there. Please come quickly, right now!"

What inspired her to do this is not known, but she kept on calling him while waiting for him in front of his hut, telling him to hurry up and come quickly until he became startled, woke up completely and ran out of the hut. He did not think of why, and whether all this about Lady Madrī being in the *sālā* was true or not, for without thinking about it he just jumped up and immediately left the hut. Then the most unexpected and unusual thing happened, for hurrying out of the hut, he had only gone about nine yards away when a huge tree in front of his hut broke and fell right on his hut, demolishing it and smashing it into fragments. If his mother had not come and roused him up so that he

woke suddenly, he would have gone on sleeping and would never have been able to wake. He said that this was his *kamma* which was still going on, for it had not yet reached its end on that day, otherwise that would have been his last moment for sure.

After this had happened, the *Ācariya* asked his mother why she had come and called him and woken him up in such a hurry that he had no time to think, so that he got out of the hut so quickly. And after he had woken up properly he was still puzzled, even despite the falling of the tree. His mother said that it was as if something made her feel that she must quickly go and wake him up to come and see Lady Madrī, and just at that moment she saw Lady Madrī actually sitting in the *sālā,* and she said that she was Lady Madrī. So she wanted the *Ācariya* — her son — to come and meet and to welcome Lady Madrī. Up to that moment, she had only heard of Lady Madrī in the *Vessantara Jātaka* story and she never ever dreamed that she would see her or that she would come to sit in the *sālā* in the forest like this. So she was completely overwhelmed and went quickly to wake up her son and bring him to the *sālā* quickly to meet the Lady Madrī. This was his mother's explanation, and the *Ācariya* went on to say that he was amazed and never thought that such a thing could happen — "but if it had not happened, I would have died for sure right then."

While listening to this story I felt as if my hair was standing on end! The *Ācariya* said further that this was a true case of an event caused by *kamma.* As to seeing Lady Madrī sitting in the *sālā,* this was probably a *Devatā nimitta* in the form of Lady Madrī which came to save his life, otherwise he would almost certainly have died that day. His mother told him that she really did see a woman sitting in the *sālā* and she was very beautiful, in fact she had never seen such a beautiful woman as this one who said that she was Lady Madrī. But when she went back to look for her after the tree had fallen, there was nobody there — only a picture of Lord Vessantara and Lady Madrī which had been there for a long time. Everyone who heard of this incident was amazed and filled with wonder that such a thing could happen.

This *Ācariya* seems to have come close to the end of his life many times, for apart from the foregoing incident in which a tree fell on his hut, he has also met wild tigers face to face on several occasions, but the *Devatās* have been able to help him escape unharmed. We will relate one further incident where this *Ācariya* narrowly escaped death in the following story.

One day, this Ācariya had been on tour and had gone to stay near a village in an extensive forest area after having come from the hills. He arrived in the evening and stopped in the forest to spend the night. After it was dark, about 9 o'clock it started to rain and a storm came on with large hailstones coming down. He could not find anywhere to shelter and had to stay close to a large tree. It was too dark for him to see anything and the rain was pouring down mixed with hailstones like pebbles falling from a mountain, as a huge storm developed. It seemed as if the tree that he was by would be uprooted while he was standing there soaked, with one hand holding his opened umbrella tent *(klod)* and his bowl hanging from his shoulder in its carrier, cold and shivering like a small bird caught in the rain at the foot of this tree. Then quite unexpectedly and suddenly a large branch broke off the tree in the storm and fell just by him, hitting his umbrella tent which he was holding, breaking it in pieces and his bowl slipped off his shoulder and fell, scattering its contents about the place. Now all he had left were his body and his life to withstand the cold weather and wait for his last moment to come. All his possessions had fallen and he had no way to find out where they were because it was too dark in the middle of the night with the rain falling heavily and the storm in full blast for him to distinguish anything. All he could do was to stand there, close his eyes and watch his breath to see when it would finally stop. All he had left were his two robes which he was wearing and they were soaking wet. The cold, numbness and pain seemed to spread quickly throughout the body. It was quite indescribable and at one time he thought he had already died due to the suffering and torment which covered him at that time.

Standing there, he reflected on the Lord Buddha who is the original Teacher, and how he had experienced suffering and torment much worse than this that he — the *Ācariya* — was experiencing at this time. The Lord was not overwhelmed by it and he was able to pass through all the dangers he met unharmed, until he was enlightened and became the *"Sāsadā",* the world Teacher. The *Ācariya* reflected:

> "As for myself, I have some suffering, which will only last until the rain stops. If I cannot stand this I should die and I should not regret the loss of my life at all."

When the rain and the storm abated, after about two hours, he was able to breathe more freely, for to begin with he had thought he would die with all

the rain, the storm and the hailstones. That night he never lay down or slept at all, for he could only stand and squat down right through until dawn. While it was raining, by chance a large snake — a banded krait — came up to him and would not go away. It crawled right up to his feet and he bent over to look closely at it and he was able to make out that it was a banded krait. That he was able to see at all was because the moon was up, although it was still very dark due to the heavy rain clouds. He tried to drive the snake away, but it would not go and just coiled itself up about half a meter from him. This made him resign himself to the course of events, thinking:

> "At present here I am full of suffering, but when the rain comes, this snake probably finds it most agreeable, so it comes out to look around for something to eat. But why, instead of looking for food, does it come and coil itself up and lie there quietly so close to me — and I can't even drive it away? Maybe it has come to be my friend at this time of suffering and hardship."

As soon as he had accepted the situation he stopped trying to drive it away and just let it lie there peacefully. But the snake never displayed any fearsome behaviour at all and it was probably just acting in its accustomed manner, and as soon as the dawn came it went away quietly.

The *Ācariya* could not leave that place while it was dark because he could not see to find his things and he could not light a match because they were in his bowl which had been knocked away by the branch and he had no way to find out where it had gone. Nor could he find his candles and "cloth" lantern which had also been in his bowl. All he could do was to stand or squat down and watch the banded krait until dawn. As soon as it got light enough to see, he looked for his things which he had lost in the night. His umbrella tent which had been knocked away by the branch that fell had been broken to pieces. His bowl had been badly bent out of shape by the branch that hit it, but it was not beyond repair and he beat out some of the dents in it so that he could use it to get and eat his food out of.

In the morning some of the villagers came out to see him. They expressed their sympathy and condolences for his plight, saying that he must have a lot of merit to have survived this ordeal, and they felt very sorry for him. But they could not help him at that time because many of the houses in the village had their roofs damaged and blown off in the storm. When an incident of this kind

occurs, if one has not yet reached one's time, one can get through unharmed — but who would want to go through such an experience as this?

Such is the way of life of a *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* and the kinds of experiences which each one has to put up with before he can become a teacher *(Ācariya)* who can show the way of Dhamma to his followers. Their lives are eventful with much suffering and torment as we have already seen from the above accounts. But even so they are not prepared to relax their striving to take it easy. Thus, where we said above, that, "all he could do was to stand or squat down... and put up with the cold all night," this was another way of fighting the enemy. This method is known as the method of being in a tight corner with no-way-out, for he was up against enemies, which were in this case, the rain, the storm, the hailstones, and the branch which broke off and fell and tore away all his possessions and broke them up and scattered them about. These were enemies that surrounded him and came so close to him that there was no way to escape, and this is what is meant by fighting the enemy in the manner of one who is in a tight corner with his back to the wall and close to death. Yet he was able to go through it and survive, which suggests that his time was not up — and he was able to go on until he became a teacher or *Ācariya,* imparting Dhamma and its meaning to others. But when his followers listen to the "Dhamma of narrowly escaping death", from him, they must think how if he had not gone through such experiences, there would probably have been no Dhamma concerning narrow escapes left to reach them and us. When one thinks about it, his followers would seem to be in a more advantageous position than their teachers in that they can hear of such experiences without going through such difficulties and hardships as those who strive and struggle.

The *Ācariya* met with a lot of suffering and difficulty throughout, from the time he first started practising the way. But the level of his Dhamma is very high and worthy of respect and veneration as an ideal and an example to all of us. Even nowadays, he still has not reduced or relaxed his striving, because he always gained good results from making strenuous efforts in the past and he tries to keep up the same thing all the time. Never has he seen any useful results coming from laziness and weakness, so he refuses to drift in that direction. As explained early on in this book, those who have seen valuable results coming from any path of practice are likely to strive along that path. This *Ācariya* should be a good example to us, although it is difficult

to find anyone who can do as he did. The level of his *citta* and his Dhamma are worthy of respect and homage, for he has great ability at *samādhi* and he is able to know the *Pretas,* ghosts, *Devatās* and the *Nāga–kings* both inwardly and outwardly, and it is rare to find anyone who can experience these things like him. In the ways of wisdom he is skilled, but the *Dhutanga* practices are his special love and he maintains them well all the time. Amongst Venerable Ajaan Mun's follows he is one that is very high in his Dhamma attainment *(Dhamma–guṇa)* and when Venerable Ajaan Mun was still alive he praised him highly saying:

> "He has a characteristic tendency to help the *Devatās* and when he speaks about the *Devatās, Pretas,* ghosts and the *Nāga–kings* he knows what he is talking about. He is content with little in the way of possessions and wants and likes to live alone in the forests and hills. He is by nature both resolute and courageous and he encourages his own striving, not becoming excited by the world of *saṁsāra* where people so easily get involved in popular trends. He holds that the forests, hills, caves and overhanging cliffs are the best place to live and practise all the time, following the way that his teacher practised. He is not one of those who tend to do an about face to curry favour with people, to fawn obsequiously on those who are senior, nor to climb the ladder of special success by 'running with the fox and hunting with the hounds', but who are hardly able to uphold anything that is essential and valuable. They just like the words but nothing that is genuine and true. If one compares them with money, all they have got is the balance sheet without any assets to back it up... He has none of these tendencies, but is one whose level of Dhamma is worthy of respect and admiration. He is also praiseworthy in the way that he does not talk much. But when he does talk, what he says is very penetrating. He does not chatter nor speak aimlessly in ways that have little of the truth in them and are improper, but he likes speaking what is true and acting in a true and genuine way and this is habitual to him, which is appropriate for one who has been a practising Bhikkhu from the day of his ordination up to the present. As to his material wealth of possessions, he has very little. But the Bhikkhus and his followers know very well that he has not accumulated a lot of things because of his tendency to like wandering in the hills and forests, rarely visiting villages and towns where there are many people. In addition he rarely stays in one place long enough for others

> living there to get to know him and to visit him regularly, and he likes to keep his interest and his focus of attention on Dhamma rather than becoming involved with and concerned about other people and their offerings of *dāna.* All this has formed his characteristics which are those of one who likes the way of searching for Dhamma and staying in places which he considers to be suitable and conducive to the way of practice for the attainment of that Dhamma which is his goal."

This *Ācariya* usually likes eventful encounters of various kinds connected with wild and fierce animals, and it is possible that he and the animals were all frequent enemies in the past. So now that he is living the life of a Bhikkhu he likes to walk in those places where he will most frequently encounter danger from them. But when we look at the various things that happened to him, it would seem that however fierce some of the animals may have been, his *citta* increased in strength every time he met up with them. Never did any of these encounters cause him any misfortune, nor did they cause him to lose heart and become dejected, nor yet were they in any way a danger to his life of purity *(Brahmacariyā).* But in fact the more he met with such experiences the more they confirmed his faith in merit, in *kamma*, in moral behaviour *(sīla),* in Dhamma, and faith in the capability of his own *citta,* all of which became stronger than they would have been normally if he had not encountered such things.

This gives rise to the speculative thought which accords with the intuitive feeling of those who practise the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna,* that it is the power of the *mettā–citta,* the power of the one who practises the way, and the power of Dhamma — the Dhamma which has always given confidence and peace to the world — that enables them to emerge unharmed and safe, and to gain strength of heart every time they encounter these various incidents. This *Ācariya* is likely to be among those who have strong *mettā–citta,* enough to cause uncertainty in the hearts of the animals which he came across and to cause their vicious ruthlessness to abate and die away, until they become as though intimate friends with the *Ācariya,* in their hearts. Otherwise they would probably have been a mortal hazard to his life of purity long ago and he would never have lived to have the story of his life told — whereas in fact he is still alive now. Dhamma is therefore the most amazing and wonderful thing beyond all expectations for those who have experienced and realised it clearly in themselves. But it is a mystery for those who do not live within

that sphere where the way of being able to know lies. Nevertheless, Dhamma is always Dhamma, standing as a pair with the world and it does not depend for its existence on whether someone makes contact with it and knows it and believes in it — or not. Because Dhamma exists by its own rights as the one Dhamma *(Eka–Dhamma)* based on its own natural principles throughout eternity and it does not depend on anything else by which it could otherwise be influenced or led.

This Ācariya must have a fine faith in the value of all the forms of Dhamma which we have already discussed buried deep in his heart, for he likes to dive into the forest, willingly putting up with all the obstacles and difficulties he finds there without ever backing out, taking it more easily or weakening. In fact it seems that he is content with his lot and goes this way more and more, with contentment and happiness. He shows the truth of this by the way he leaves the Wat to go on his *Dhutanga* wanderings in the forests and hills every year at the end of the *vassa* period, when he goes away and nobody sees him or knows where he has gone to. He has never been seen to hang about where there are lots of people, nor to get involved with others, but always, he sets off for the forests and hills to strive for the way of Dhamma in his heart without letting up or giving up. He can talk easily about the forests, hills, caves and overhanging cliffs in all sorts of places with an evident satisfaction, and if one leads him on to describe these places in more detail it arouses an enthusiasm for such places in those who listen to him and they become engrossed and do not want him to stop. One pictures oneself going the same way with a fully committed and joyous heart, as if one were dropping all one's burdens and restrictions of every kind from one's shoulders — in other words, dropping the *kilesas* away from one's heart in those places that he described. After listening to him one gains heart and starts thinking how one would like to go and stay in such suitable places. Places which this *Ācariya* described, where he had gone to practise the way and where the heart can become calm and peaceful much more easily than in more ordinary places where he stayed until he became wearied of them. This *Ācariya* said:

"Sometimes while I was sitting in meditation, or it may have been while I was asleep, I am not sure which, but during the night a huge tiger came

quietly up to the small bamboo platform where I sat and slept, and I never knew anything about it at all. But when I woke I saw its footprints, for everyday I swept the grounds round where I stayed, clear of leaves and things and anything walking there would leave clearly visible marks. So when I saw its footprints in the morning near where I stayed I followed them to see how close it had been and found that it had come right up to the platform where I slept. Not just close to the platform four or five feet away, but so close that the last footprint was less than about eighteen inches away. It probably came to sniff me out and finding that I was still alive and a person it quietly retreated, and when it went, it went back over the same tracks that it had come by without wandering about over the area where I was staying. When I saw its footprints, so bold and fearlessly coming right up to me a little shiver of fear went through me, for its footprints were so large, well above the average size. But it only came that one night and it never came close again. I stayed there for several months and if it had thought to come and make a meal of me it would probably have returned. But it never came near, although I heard it roaring and growling round about there as I had so often heard them everywhere in the forest."

I have a tendency to make fanciful suggestions, so having heard what the *Ācariya* said, I immediately said to him in an encouraging manner:

"I think that it came to pay respect to you and to admire your virtues *(pāramī),* and that it did not come as an enemy. As it was an animal it could not be ordained as a monk and practise the way of Dhamma like a human being, so when it went wandering here and there and happened to come across a Bhikkhu who had a kind heart it felt confident with faith in you and came to pay homage and admire your virtue. But if it had come at any other time, I think it would have been concerned lest it frighten the Bhikkhu, so it came to sniff you while you were asleep so that it could admire you to its heart's content while you were not conscious of its presence and it need not fear that you would be scared stiff — for this would have been contrary to its purpose in coming to pay respects to you. As soon as it had paid respect to you to its satisfaction it then withdrew immediately, for fear that you may wake up and be afraid, or that you may make a symbolic gesture[75] or use some magic saying or *mantra* to cast a spell over it which may spoil its good-hearted feelings and respect for you. I think that this is the most likely

75. In other words, "a magic mudra".

explanation, otherwise, how else would it be so bold as to go right up to where you were resting?"

The *Ācariya* laughed quietly and said:

"How would it know enough about me to have any faith or respect? But it may well have thought that — "this is a nice snack for me" — or some such thought, for sure, and that is the only reason why it crept up to me to have a look. Then as soon as it realised that it was a person it went away quickly because from the time they are born they have an instinctive fear of people. From that day I never saw any sign of it coming to sniff me or look at me again while I was there."

He said further:

"Animals of this kind are strange in that it seems as though they are possessed of some tendency in their hearts which makes them want to come and look at *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who are sitting in *samādhi,* walking *caṅkama,* striving to practise the way, sitting in meditation practice under a mosquito net or sleeping. Sometimes in the morning they would decide to come and look me up, and they would sit there like a dog, looking at me complacently but not acting in any way that would frighten me. Sometimes one would be prowling about in the middle of the night roaring and growling and it would then come up and see me in the cave where I was staying. As soon as it got there it would just sit there and look at me, like a dog, and when it had enough it would go without doing anything to frighten me at all. But I could not help being rather apprehensive, because they are always fearsome animals. What is rather strange is that, the tigers that came to see me, regardless of where it was or when they came were always very large striped tigers with long bodies and quite awesome.[76] But they never displayed any aggression to make me afraid at all. All they did was to look at me, and when they had finished they went away and never returned. Wherever I stayed, in whatever kind of place, when they came to see me they always came in the same manner; not as an enemy coming to bite or claw me for food, but in the manner of a domestic pet well accustomed to people. So they never had the appearance of an enemy, but their eyes look-

76. In the Thai language the word "seua" really means the "large cat family" which can sometimes mean a leopard or various other members of the large cat family; but in this case it obviously means a large tiger.

ing at me always seemed to be very sharp and implacable which was their nature even though they were not filled with the anger and hunger to make them spring on me to eat me as food. Even so, the nature of their eyes is very sharp and frightening."

I then asked him:

"When those tigers came to visit you, did you talk to them at all?"

He said:

"Sometimes I would say something, such as, 'Why have you come here? For this is not the place for you to find your food, but a place for a Bhikkhu to stay and practise meditation. You should go away to wander about elsewhere. Don't come here, because this Bhikkhu may become so frightened that your coming becomes evil, which may lead you to hell.' But in saying, 'I may become frightened,' in fact this was just talk, because I had been frightened from the first moment I saw it."

"Did you ever walk towards any of these tigers when they came and sat in front of you, staring at you?"

"Sometimes I walked towards them. For after I told them to go and they took no notice of what I said, but remained there about six to eight yards away, just sitting and looking at me, I would walk towards them pointing with a stick or my finger, saying, 'The place for you to be wandering about is way over there, where it is all forests and hills and you can go where you like to your heart's content. It would be so much better than coming around here frightening this Bhikkhu. Go! Now! Don't come sitting here for fun, scaring a Bhikkhu who is doing his meditation practice or you may soon end up in hell!' When they went they took one sudden leap away and then disappeared silently."

"I think these tigers know something about what Bhikkhus have within them, otherwise why should they come up and look for me in the caves where I stayed. Because some of the caves were large and roomy and not the sort of place where tigers like to stay or climb up to, for they like to live in well concealed places, out of sight where they can keep their meat and

their kills in ways that conform to their nature. They must know something about the ways of Bhikkhus for them to make the effort to come quietly in the middle of the day to see me. Much in the same way as children who think it would be fun to climb up to a cave and visit a Bhikkhu staying there — which often happens. But tigers are different from children in that they also like to visit a Bhikkhu during the night or in the morning before going on *piṇḍapāta*."

"Before these tigers came up to see you did you ever think that you would like them to come up and visit you?"

"Why should I ever think of wanting them to visit me? Even when they come for only a few moments I almost die of fear and I break out into a sweat. If they came to stay for a long time and showed no intention of leaving, I am afraid I would surely get an attack of fever. Who would ever think, in a kind of perverse playfulness, of actually wanting a tiger to look them up for no real purpose at all?" he gently laughed.

"Seeing that you are obviously very courageous and are not afraid to live alone without any companion to talk to, I merely thought that you might like a tiger to come and keep you company and talk to. That is why I asked you that question."

He grinned and then said:

"To look for trouble and danger is not the right way to act at all. Who would be bold enough to think in such a way as that, which is a careless inconsequential thing to do and out of keeping with Dhamma? Supposing it suddenly appeared there showing every intention of actually attacking and killing, in what world would this bold daredevil who knows no fear end up?"

The practice as done by *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* must seem, when one thinks about it from the viewpoint of most people, to be very risky and dangerous. But when one thinks about it from the viewpoint of Dhamma, one can see how it is normal and natural for people who have gained value from any particular way to want to go on looking for more in the same way. So those who have

gained good results from such a way of practice will probably continue to "scramble up" by that way, and even though it is difficult and they must risk suffering and danger in various ways, they have to put up with and accept it to some extent. Most of those who have been able to establish a firm basis in their *cittas*, until they have been able to act as teachers — *Ācariyas* — to other Bhikkhus, novices and people in general, have practised in the foregoing way. Thus Venerable Ajaan Mun used to say:

> *"Dhamma is to be found where death is close by, if one has not been faced with death one has not seen Dhamma."*

This is because to risk one's life and sanity by truly facing death with a heart that is unshakeably intent on the Dhamma of Deliverance is the principle which is upheld by those *Kammaṭṭhāna* Bhikkhus who are determined to practise the way in a true and genuine manner. Therefore they are likely to meet with insufficiency of food and poverty of possessions all the time while they are striving for Dhamma. But their hearts will be fully contented with Dhamma, for they have peace and brightness where the heart abides, without any external involvement and turbulence.

10

The Practice of the Dhutangas

The thirteen *Dhutanga* observances are necessary forms of Dhamma for the kind of Bhikkhus as described in the last chapters and they are an essential part of the way of life of those whose aim is to progress towards the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna.* This is no different from the way in which the *Dhutanga* observances were necessary forms of Dhamma for the Bhikkhus at the time of the Lord Buddha.

Some Bhikkhus like to live under the shade of a tree in the dry season, until their mosquito nets and klods all go mouldy and discoloured after becoming wet by the dew every night in their exposed unprotected position. For in the cold season the dew is very heavy and the mosquito nets and klods become completely soaked every night. In the morning they must lay everything out to dry in the sun every day, but even so they still go mouldy. Wherever the mould grows in the cloth it makes a small black spot which cannot be washed out and remains there until the cloth is destroyed. But no way has been found to prevent fungus moulds from becoming established in cloth which is out in the open for a long time, becoming saturated with dew every night and drying before it can be put in the sun to dry.

These Bhikkhus also do the practice of walking *caṅkama* in a true and genuine manner so that they can attain calm and happiness from it. Each time they do it they may go on for three to five hours, until they feel genuinely tired. Then they stop walking *caṅkama* and go and sit in meditation practice for several hours, after which they stop and rest.

Those who resolutely practise the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhānas* while being completely committed to them, will see the value of each *Dhutanga* practice and how much benefit they can attain from them. *For each Dhutanga is a means of assisting those who practise them to reach the higher levels of Dhamma step by step. Not one of them is ever an obstacle in the way of the Path, Fruition and Nibbāna.* They are all forms of Dhamma as the means of training those who practise to become

courageous and full of cheer in Dhamma, and also to become "warriors" who fight in every way that weakens and drives the *kilesas* from their hearts.

Those who have only lived in houses or buildings and have never gone out to the forest are not likely to have seen the kinds of things that happen in the forest. They have probably seen only the things that happen where people live in houses — which are ordinary kinds of things which all of us have come across and which we are all quite familiar with. But it is also likely that they never think in such a way as to see what disadvantages come from these kinds of things, and how they may extricate themselves and go free from them. Day by day they are bound to run into the same things that they have met in the past, and they get the *dukkha* that comes from them every hour of every day without exception. But they have no interest in searching for the reason why, even only to the extent of being able to avoid them.

To live in the forest in the right way, which accords with the true purpose of the *Dhutangas,* a person must be a "warrior", a fighter in order to extricate himself truly from the various obstacles which are in his own heart. He does not merely live there like an animal in the forest, which has always lived there and is completely familiar with the forest life. But he lives there for the purpose of examining things which are within himself and which arise in various circumstances, with Dhamma as his ultimate goal.

Of all the enemies to his life in the forest, the greatest is likely to be fear. This type of *kilesa* is an obstacle which makes the heart sink down so that it no longer wants to stay in the forest. When he understands that this *kilesa* is an obstacle barring his way forward towards the Path and Fruition, he must clear it away and drive it out from his heart until it is entirely eradicated and there remains only bravery and courage. Then he will be able to go anywhere, live anywhere and lie down anywhere without fear of death — which is yet another type of *kilesa* — and he will see clearly in his own experience just how valuable and how important this *Dhutanga* is. This is why the Lord Buddha prescribed the *Dhutanga* of living in the forest as a routine practice. But apart from this, living in the forest is also valuable in so far as one has no distractions and involvement with all those things that one associates with. Things which generally speaking tend to depress the heart and bury it so that it goes right down, giving it no chance to recover and emerge for it to be able to be its own master even for a few moments at a time. Admiring the natural scenery in various places in the forest where one is staying is not the sort of

thing that disturbs and upsets the heart causing it to be agitated and confused — as do those things which arouse one's thoughts and imagination which are just waiting to "put one to sleep" as soon as one is invaded by any one of these many kinds of things. The more one is invaded by these things by day and night, all the time, the more difficult it is to say how long one would be able to stand up to it and how many times before becoming unconscious[77] and falling down, due the various poisons which one is "inhaling" all the time from those things.

Those Bhikkhus who think about the *Dhutangas* and examine them to see the purpose behind them, whatever understanding they gain, they will see the value of the *Dhutanga* of living in the forest, to the extent of their understanding. Because this *Dhutanga* Dhamma is a beautiful adornment which has always decorated the *Sāsana* in the most wonderful way; and amongst those Buddhists who maintain it and do not give it up nor let it degenerate there is no sadness or lack of cheerfulness. This *Dhutanga* will also adorn the Bhikkhus who continue to uphold it, making them into a *Sobhaṇa Sangha*[78] in the Dhamma and *Vinaya,* which gives no cause for adverse criticism whether externally or internally.

The Forest University

Places such as forests, hills, caves, overhanging cliffs, charnel grounds, jungle and remote hill forests where the natural environment remains undisturbed far away from any villages, are the places which bring mindfulness, wisdom, knowledge and skill to the Bhikkhu whose interest is in Dhamma, with the aim of attaining freedom for himself. Such a Bhikkhu does not like the distraction and turmoil associated with anything which is an obstacle, an enemy, hindering his progress towards freedom from *Dukkha.* In Buddhism, such places have always been favoured, right from the beginning when the Lord Buddha was the courageous leader undaunted in the face of death who practised for his own development in such places, before he became fully enlightened in the highest Dhamma, and then went out to teach those who

77. Unconscious: Unmindful. This means that the Bhikkhu has lost his mindfulness and fallen into the "waking-sleep" of daydreams and imagination.

78. *Sobhaṇa Sangha:* Beautiful *Sangha. Sobhaṇa* refers to the "beautiful" states of consciousness and are in contrast to the *akusala* states — being, for example, greed, hate and delusion.

were fit to receive the teaching. All the *Sāvakas* who heard the Dhamma teaching and learnt from the Lord about those places which were suitable for them, variously went off and practised the way. They followed in the footsteps of the Buddha until mindfulness, wisdom and skilfulness arose which were equal to the internal tricks (of the *kilesas*) which had deceived them and led them down to hell in past lives both short and long through countless ages. Then they shook off and entirely got rid of all that was filthy and loathsome in their hearts, and this they did in this forest, or on that hill, or in a cave over there, or under an overhanging cliff in that district, in a charnel ground, a deserted house, or under the shade of a tree while living in a remote district in this forest or that hill. These are the places where Dhamma was planted and cultivated in the hearts of those who practised the way, giving them an unshakeable root principle within them, and this has continued right up to the present day. *If one compares this with modern institutions, it is analogous to those large and well known Universities where students may work for their Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's degrees, or whatever other scholarly distinctions there are, so that those students who are interested in learning all that they need to know to finish the course may return home and be of value in developing their own country and people.*

All of the above places were considered important at the time of the Lord Buddha and since then throughout the ages right up to the present for the "students" practising Dhamma at various levels of development. In these places they did everything to the utmost of their mindfulness and strength in the various stages of skill which they should aim for and attain in such a "forest university". In other words they attained their "degrees" at their various levels of development until they reached the topmost level. The levels of Dhamma which they learnt and practised in those places, which we have likened to a university, are those of the Path and Fruition of *Sotāpanna,* the Path and Fruition of *Sakadāgāmī,* the Path and Fruition of *Anāgāmī* and the Path and Fruition of *Arahant* with, at the same moment, the attainment of the one *Nibbāna*. At this final stage the student becomes a great Master because whoever reaches this final level is a perfect "field of merit", both to himself and for others, and there is no grade of learning which is higher than this throughout the threefold Universe.

So, as to accord with the world, which has always been a pair with Dhamma, the forest hills, jungle and other such places may be called the University of the Great Master, the Lord Buddha, the founder of the religion. The Lord

prescribed such places right from the beginning when he first formulated our religion by his teaching, which he bestowed on the Bhikkhus and others from that time on with such brief injunctions as *"Rukkhamūla–senāsana"* (dwelling at the foot of a tree). Afterwards he gradually increased the number of *Dhutangas* up to thirteen which also includes the *Rukkhamūla–senāsana Dhutanga.*

These "universities", are where the Bhikkhus at the time of the Lord Buddha liked to stay, to learn and practise the way truly and to their utmost with complete dedication until they attained the first, second and third grades and finally the fourth which was their Master's degree. Then they brought the pure and true Dhamma to their associates and taught it in place of the Lord, the Great Teacher, so as to lighten his burden to some extent. So Buddhism developed and prospered and spread out to countless numbers of people because it relied upon the "university" of forests and hills and other such places which were so favourable. For they proved to be of the greatest value both to the Great Teacher and to all his *"Sāvaka"* followers who reached the final stage of learning. They became "Masters" to whom the world bowed in homage as their ideal, both in behaviour and in what concerns the heart. This has continued through the ages right down to us who are here now and who uphold them as the guiding line of our lives and hearts and practise the way following their example, enough to know the significance of being a person at a level of what is generally accepted as that of a "genuine human being".

When we think of the *Dhutanga* observances and make comparisons with the places where universities should be established, what course of study should be provided and what syllabus should these universities in the world have? A good guide may be found in the thirteen *Dhutanga* observances and the fourteen *Khandha* observances as taught in Buddhism. These can give an indication of a suitable location to set up the "university" and the basic principles of such a Buddhist University. Thus, some of the *Dhutanga* observances give a good indication of the kind of places that would be suitable for their practice, such as the injunctions to "live in the forest", to "stay under the shade of a tree", to "live in a charnel ground", to "visit a charnel ground", to "accept whatever place to stay is arranged by other people", to "live out in the open without any shelter", and to live in any other appropriate and suitable place, such as, a cave, an overhanging cliff, or an empty building where nobody is staying.

As for getting some indication of the principles of the curriculum — which is the way of practice — in such a university, the *Sangha* is able to give some

help in this regard. Thus, the students should keep the observances of using only cloth from the charnel ground, having only the three robes as their clothing, relying only on *piṇḍapāta* food, eating only out of the bowl, eating food only once a day, refusing food given after *piṇḍapāta* and not lying down to sleep for any set number of nights. In addition there are the Forty *Kammaṭṭhānas*[79] which are the basis of the way of meditation practice which also give assistance in this curriculum in conjunction with the *Dhutangas.*

In summary, Buddhism is a religion that is complete with many branches of knowledge and it has acted as a university ever since the time that the Great Teacher started teaching Dhamma to the world. There are many places where this university is established and there are many forms of learning which are available which the students may choose to take up and learn and practise. Those places which the Lord Buddha recommended as being the foremost, the most important, and the highest branch of the university are the forest, the shade of a tree, a charnel ground, and living out in the open. In addition there are other special places including, a cave, an overhanging cliff, the top or sides of a hill, a valley, and the edge of the forest or hills, all of which are also to be considered as special places which are recommended in the same way by the Lord. The principles of training as used by this "university" in the various courses that are offered, are based on the practice of the various *Dhutanga* observances which are to be kept up all the time in all situations — as we have already described herein. In other words, the practices of using only discarded cloth obtained from the charnel ground, using only the three robes, going on *piṇḍapāta* every day as an observance, eating only from the bowl, eating only once a day, and in addition the Forty *Kammaṭṭhānas* such as, for example, the practice of *Ānāpānasati* (which will be discussed further on) are forms of learning which will not lead to disappointment in those who variously practise them for they lead to the attainment of the third, second, first and the Master's degrees. These are the titles given to the performance of those students who have had the interest and the commitment to follow the course through in all its parts at the level of the degree that they worked to attain.

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79. Lists of these Forty *Kammaṭṭhānas,* which are the recommended forms of meditation practice, may be found in any of the common Buddhist texts, the most popular one being the "*Visuddhimagga*". In brief, the forty meditation objects consist of: i) The 10 *Kasina* exercises, ii) The 10 Meditations on "loathsomeness", iii) The 10 Recollections, iv) The 4 *Brahmavihāras,* v) The 4 *Arūpa jhānas,* vi) The Contemplation of the loathsomeness of food, vii) The Contemplation of the 4 elements.

The place where this university is located is very extensive and is not crowded and constricted as are the universities where the "world" goes to get their learning. The number of students can be very large, including both men and women, monks and lay people of all nationalities, race and colour regardless of class, age or educational background. It is open and accepts students in all seasons, every day of the week and at all times of the day or night. In fact it is always open and has been so ever since it was founded almost two thousand six hundred years ago by the Lord Buddha, who was the first "professor" to teach in it. From the beginning he accepted students and taught them from the most elementary levels up to the level of the Master *Citta* — which is Dhamma throughout.

The students of the Lord Buddha are of four types, these being: Bhikkhus, *Bhikkhuṇīs, Upāsakas* and *Upāsikās,* but as there are no *Bhikkhuṇīs* left now, we may put *Sāmaṇeras* in their place. The first students to graduate from the university were the *Pañcavaggīya* — the first five, of whom Venerable Aññākondañña was the first. The second group included Venerable Yasa Kulaputta and sixty friends of his. The third group was composed of the three Jaṭila brothers who were Teachers, and all their followers, altogether making up one thousand and three Bhikkhus. All the members of these three groups attained the completion of their learning and training from the principles of the course of training *(vijjā)* in freedom *(vimutti)* in various places in this "university", and they all became Masters. These were the "assistant professors" under the Lord Buddha, who were also called the *Sāvaka Arahants.* They helped to teach other people, thereby taking on some of the burden of teaching and reducing the load that the Lord was carrying. Their reward was the result of their work which their followers gained to a greater or lesser extent, and they looked on this as being sufficient reward, taking into account the *mettā* which they had for them. If we consider the value that they got from this in terms of worldly things, then each of them received thirty bowls[80] of food per month equally, from the Lord down to the smallest *Sāmaṇera* — which is a very good example of equal treatment. It is not easy to find such kindness to equal that of the Great Masters who always have *mettā* for the world, which never diminishes or dulls.

Therefore we who are Buddhists can confidently assert that the "university" and its various "courses" of instruction which belong to Buddhism, as

80. There is a play on words here. The Thai word for "bowl" is baht — "baht" being the same word as the standard unit of Thai currency. So they each got thirty baht per month.

founded and formed by the Lord Buddha, and where he himself taught and directed all the *Sāvaka Arahants* so that they then went out to teach in his place, is the foremost "university" and the foremost teaching in the world, and there is no other teaching to equal it in the universe. Even the *Devaputtas,* the *Devatās, Indra, Brahma, Yama,* the *Yakkhas,* the *Nāgas* and the *Garuḍas,* all still pay homage and reverence to the Lord and accept him as the foremost Teacher and the greatest Master in the universe — as in the often repeated verse in praise of the Buddha: *"... satthā devamanussānaṁ..."*.[81]

Even with the Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, his Enlightenment arose in the midst of this "university", as well as all of his knowledge of the way to attain freedom *(vijjā–vimutti),* which has already been mentioned above. This is why he praised and extolled the virtues of those "forest institutes" in his religion. When a worthy man was ordained as a Bhikkhu, the Lord taught him the Five *Kammaṭṭhānas* and the *Anusāsana* (instructions as to the mode of living), such as dwelling under the shade of a tree, to act as a pointer to show the general way of practice and some of the things which they should do. These are also the means of cutting down the thick, tangled forest with persistence — in other words, the various kinds of *kilesas* in the heart which enclose it and prevent it from seeing the path leading to the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* — and clearing the place with the Dhamma weapons which the Lord provided. But when *Sāmaṇeras* were ordained he only taught them the Five *Kammaṭṭhānas* to fight against the various vicious *Māras,* to destroy them and clear them from the heart. He did not teach them the *anusāsanas* concerned with living in the forests and hills — probably because they were still too young for this. So he did not send them out into the front line of battle, which was not yet necessary for them. In the time of the Lord Buddha the number of people who became *Sāvaka Arahants* was very great and nearly all of them attained Enlightenment from the forest institutes which we have discussed.

The Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* graduated in Dhamma from the hills and forests where they gained their Master's degrees. The courses of training which they completed in this "university" were concerned with liberation *(vimutti),* so when they went out to teach the world, it was a subject which they could be absolutely sure about and in which they had full confidence. There was nothing which was modified, false or ambiguous in it, both in regard to those worthy ones who had fully attained to it as well as the knowledge of it

81. This verse is the daily morning chant that begins with *"Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṁ sammasambuddho..."*.

in which they were fully proficient. This is very different from the knowledge and the students which are found everywhere else in the world, but the "*Sangha* University" which we have described has difficulty in finding students who want to learn. This may be because this institute gives more authority to each student to look after himself than it gives to anyone else to look after him and direct him and govern him in the way that they do in the world's universities. In other words, to enter, to stay and to train in any of this institute's places or branches is for the student to choose and decide as he likes. In a similar way, amongst the various subjects and courses of training which are available in this institute, each individual has the right to choose those which he finds suitable to himself. Both the *Ācariya* and the student are chosen by himself, and if his *Ācariya* — who is himself — is strict and resourceful in training his follower — for both the *Ācariya* and the pupil are in one and the same person — driving himself on with skill, then both will steadily progress towards a state of calm and happiness. Then even if he should go into a forest which is full of all sorts of wild animals and tigers, he has no fear and can stay there calmly relaxed, peaceful and happily enjoying the noises made by all the animals which serenade the forest with their "music", each in its own characteristic way, to which he can listen with absorbed attention. This does not cause one to lose one's wealth like man made music which penetrates deeply and catches the heart. If one's heart is still excitable, only waiting to emerge and "put its head out" to get some fresh air, it may be blown away by the storm of music and scattered about in an uncontrolled manner, which is most unseemly. This can also spoil oneself and that which is of value to one, leading to loss of restraint and loss in a very real way.

On the other hand, the music of the forest animals is a soothing lullaby which they each sing at their own time and the sound makes one become pleasantly absorbed in listening to it with a sympathy that touches the heart. But wherever a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* goes to stay, all sorts of animals, two legged, four legged, winged and without wings tend to gather round in his vicinity, and the longer he stays there the more seem to come. At times the sound of them calling to their friends who are all about the place, in their own animal languages resounds loudly through the forest; and this is the same sort of thing as happens with us human beings. For all beings who have hearts, naturally think of each other, but they are not able to speak human languages to let us know about themselves, although each species has its own inherent

language which derives from its birth and upbringing — as also do people. Their calls and the noises they make to each other are what the Bhikkhus call music, and it goes on all the time. In the morning one type of animal will make its call; later in the morning another species will start up; then in the afternoon yet others will call out to each other, and so it goes on throughout the day and night. It is almost as if they work in shifts, one taking over when the previous one finishes. Although in fact they are probably like the chickens which people keep round their homes which just crow at that time which is natural to them. But in the forests there are many kinds of animals, each kind having a different time for wandering about searching for food and making their characteristic calls and cries and never are they all silent, even at night, when many species search for food as others do by day. Therefore their cries and calls never cease throughout the twenty four hours of the day.

Living and training in the subject of Dhamma, in accordance with the policy and way of Buddhism, in the institutions that we have described above is far more difficult than the way of learning from text books. But if one can put up with the difficulties of this way of learning and practice and if one gets the results they will be great results, one will have great merit and one will know clearly in one's own heart the value of striving persistently to the limit of one's endurance.

Anyone who is not as resolute and bold as a true warrior is not likely to be able to stay there. Because it is rather like being in a reformatory the whole time — even though there is nobody there to force or intimidate one — apart, that is, from the volition due to anxiety about what one will become in the future, which compels one from within oneself to go on.

When one has oneself done the work of training in Buddhism in the foregoing way until one has seen the awesome power of the hardships and tormenting conditions in everything of all kinds, then one will be able to realise fully how proficient and courageous the Buddha and his Noble Disciples were, and one will see how their lineage was truly that of skilled warriors.

The business of getting rid of all one's doubts and uncertainties entirely, in such a way that one knows and sees quite clearly for oneself, means — that other people have fear, but if one has not yet experienced fear of that kind one will not yet appreciate that there is anything special about it that should

make one think much of it; other people have suffering *(dukkha),* but if one has not experienced suffering such as that, one will not appreciate that there is anything special about it which should make one think; others discipline themselves in their various ways of striving to develop, which involves much *dukkha* and difficulty, but if one has not experienced this kind of discipline and *dukkha,* for oneself, one will not appreciate that there is anything special about it which should make one think; there is suffering and torment which comes from various causes and which arises out of the strenuous training undertaken by other people, but if one has not yet experienced these things for oneself, one will not appreciate that there is anything special about it which should make one think; and this goes right the way through to happiness, which is the result that arises to a greater or lesser extent from all the training and discipline done by other people, but if one has not yet experienced this in one's own heart one will not yet appreciate that there is anything special about it which should make one think and wonder greatly. Even if one has the belief that these things can truly be as others describe them, it still doesn't reach one's heart. But when the time comes that one has actually experienced these things oneself, both the causes — which means the training and disciplining of oneself in various ways and the acceptance of the ensuing sufferings and discomforts of many kinds; and also the results — which means the happiness of heart which one derives from the various forms of training, from the lowest to the highest levels, then one will see for oneself that it is something special which makes one think much of it. In fact one may say that it makes one appreciate it from the full depth of one's heart, as well as making one see in the fullness of one's heart just how baneful is the state of *dukkha.* Then one will see full well the value which has come from those causes which one has enacted, and all doubts of all kinds will disappear, without any more need to go and ask anyone else. Because the answers have all become obvious to oneself, both in connection with good, evil, happiness and suffering, which all arise from oneself alone.

The Lord Buddha, whose *mettā* brought the greatest blessings to the world, intended that people and other beings should practise and realise or experience things for themselves. He did not want them to accept his words in the manner of someone who brings exciting news just for us to listen to, even though it is true. So the practice of Dhamma at each and every level as it becomes appropriate to each one, should be a matter of knowing and seeing, and he

wanted this to be experienced by each one for himself in his own heart. This is far better than hearing and gaining knowledge from other people which one has not actually met and attained for oneself. For it was the aim of the Lord to get each one to do the work for himself, to know for himself, and to see for himself so that it may be truly his own possession and treasure. Then nobody, however bold or daring will be able to take any part of it away from him, nor make him lose any of it.

It was the intention of the Lord that one who practises should go into the forest by himself. Even if he meets up with wild animals, like tigers, he should do so himself; and when he meets a tiger he should know for himself how much fear he has. In evading and curing it in various ways, the methods he uses should be his own methods derived from his own skill in mindfulness and wisdom. The heart which he trains and disciplines to stand up to such incidents should be his own heart; and the ease of body and peace of heart which he gets from the training and discipline should be the value which is in his own heart. This is far better than having the good news of the value of someone else. The heart *(citta)* is what penetrates the Path and Fruition at all its levels, because of this training and discipline; so let it be your own heart that breaks through. In gaining freedom from *dukkha* of heart, let it be your own heart that gains freedom, rather than hearing about someone else attaining freedom due to their own efforts. It is also right that our religion should be the special wealth of those who are interested to promote and guard it. Normally this religion is the general wealth of all those who have interest in practising and looking after it, but then it turns into your own abundant wealth due to its development to completion in your own heart. We may say that such a person is skilled and clever, using his own mindfulness and wisdom to lead him to by-pass the world and *saṁsāra* and to reach *Nibbāna,* thus conforming to the intention of the Great Teacher, to whom the religion belongs, who taught his followers with such insight and ability with the purpose that those who come to stay in the shade of his supreme perfection should gain skill and cleverness so that they may penetrate the Path and Fruition to become *Ariya Puggala* of the highest level and safe, having got rid of all the evil, vile things which had been their enemies for countless lives.

When they have attained the level of the Master of great learning and wisdom they will have reached the completion of their learning and training in the *Sangha* University of Buddhism with full honours, and there is no need

for them to go elsewhere for them to learn anything for the remainder of their lives. This is called the complete and perfect learning of the *"Brahmacariyā",*[82] and it is nothing but this that the Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* learnt to completion in their hearts. They did not learn anything elsewhere but in the heart, because it is the heart alone that, being deluded, leads one into birth and death. So when learning is completed in the heart, all affairs of all kinds come to an end.

The Purpose & Places of Practice

The *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* in the line from Venerable Ajaan Mun endeavour to learn about and around the "body–city" and the "*citta*–city" which are the great source of the threefold universe *(Ti–bhava).* Even though they may go and live in the forests, the hills, in caves, under overhanging cliffs or anywhere else, the most important point to realise is that they are doing this so as to learn primarily about the *citta*. Even nowadays (1970), it may be seen how there are many *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* in the lineage of Venerable Ajaan Mun who spend the rains retreat *(vassa)* in the forests and hills, following his example, and they do this primarily for the sake of the *citta.* The training and discipline of various kinds which accord with their characteristic tendencies, mindfulness, wisdom and ability, are done primarily for the sake of knowing the end-point which is the heart — this alone is the one that matters.

A Bhikkhu who is really determined to gain freedom is thus rather like someone who dies without having anything arranged for his funeral, so that others can cremate or keep the corpse. When his time comes anywhere will do without being concerned about it — and that place becomes the cemetery where he dies. While his *khandhas* are still together and alive he will continue to stay in any such place that is suitable for him to strive and develop himself in Dhamma, and there he will strive all the time without let up or ceasing. When sitting he strives, when standing, walking or lying down he strives, and the only time he stops is when he sleeps. If he does not do it this way he will never be able to catch up with the tracks left by the *kilesas* and *taṇhā* which have the knack of leading beings to death and wandering round the worlds of *saṁsāra,* and much faster than the wind in the greatest storms. Even in one

82. *Brahma–faring:* refers to the life and training of the practising Bhikkhu from his ordination through to the end.

moment they can drag him round the worlds in the three realms of the universe without his being able to follow and keep up with them, and they bring *dukkha* to their owner who is more stupid and lacking in wisdom than they are. Thus he experiences *dukkha* which is sharp, hot and troublesome as well as being painful and tormenting, for there is no *dukkha* that can compare with the "taste" of that *dukkha* which the various *kilesas* bring to burden the heart.

Therefore, someone who sees how baneful these *kilesas* are in a way which goes to his heart, is bound to strive to get rid of them all the time — every moment — and he has no time whether in the morning, afternoon or evening to rest, relax and take it easy, letting the *kilesas* and *taṇhā* walk all over him and do any more harm. One way or another he will reach the "far bank of the river" where it is safe and free from *dukkha.* However arduous and difficult this may be he will put up with it, supported by the thought of all the various births and lives through which he must otherwise whirl about because of the force of *avijjā* and *taṇhā,* which means *dukkha,* which is bound to infiltrate everything in all these lives. He should hurry to cure himself, to get free and to overcome them entirely in this life now, while he can, and should, be curing himself. Because there is no doubt that in this life he is a complete and normal human being who also has the status of being ordained as a Bhikkhu who should indeed be able to dry out the *kilesas* from his heart in whatever way is suitable. One can hardly think of any possible future lives when conditions will be as suitable as those that he has at present. Whatever work ought to be done to completion to reach and attain that which man should reach and attain, that work is what he is doing at present, and he should finish it off while still alive in these *khandhas.* He must not be slow and sluggish, wasting time all the time, for when the baneful one, which is death, and which has such power, reaches him, he will be in difficulty and he will lose everything which he should have attained and have when that time comes.

These are some of the ways in which such Bhikkhus rouse up and encourage themselves to hurry and increase their striving in their various places and situations, so that they do not become complacent and self-satisfied. Those who are in the stages of *samādhi* development then work at it with urgency so that it will become much stronger, and so that when they turn to investigation in the way of wisdom, it will be strong and fast — as they want it to be. On the other hand, those who are starting out on the stages of wisdom development, or who are already working at them, do their investigation with

increasing urgency until they know clearly and see truly into the elements *(dhātu), khandha, āyatana* and the various types of *kilesas* which penetrate into things which are closely associated with the activities of the body and *citta.* This enables them to extract the *kilesas* one by one, steadily, all the time while they are full of zeal and striving, by depending on the forests, the hills and the jungles, which by acting as a strategic battleground and a suitable environment, help them to gain victory in their fight while struggling and striving to smash up all the *kilesas.* Then depending on whatever strength of mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort they have, they destroy so much of the *kilesas* each day — these *kilesas* which have established and concentrated their "armies" and forces within.

Some of these Bhikkhus win these battles stage by stage and leave the university of the jungles, the hills, the caves, the overhanging cliffs or the charnel grounds. Sometimes when they have won the battle and leave completely fulfilled, perfect, smiling and bright, with their hearts pure throughout like the moon on the day of the full moon, they meet up with their colleagues and discuss the results that they have had from their practice of the way. They tell each other about the things that happened, and it is the most wonderful thing that one can listen to. Nowhere else can one hear anything to compare with it in any gathering of people anywhere. For in such a group one will hear Dhamma which is pure, fresh and direct — as if one were listening to a group of *Sāvaka Arahants* at the time of the Lord Buddha, telling each other about the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* which they had attained. Nowadays it is extremely rare for anyone to hear such a discussion, but there are still some Bhikkhus who are able to talk and who are skilled enough in their knowledge of these Dhammas to be able to have a discussion together and they are the most revered amongst those Bhikkhus who practise the way in the present era. The Dhamma of these Bhikkhus can be a great encouragement to others who practise the way, making their faith both firm and strong so that they have the power of body and heart to be active and vigorous in destroying their own *kilesas,* without any weakness of the kind that makes for slackening of effort and zeal. This they do by taking up the ways of practice which Venerable Ajaan Mun so skilfully bestowed on us when he was alive. Places like the hills and forests are therefore where the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who follow in line from Venerable Ajaan have always liked to go wandering to do their practice ever since.

Nowadays there are many Dhutanga Bhikkhus who spend the *vassa*[83] period in the forests and hills in the same way as Venerable Ajaan Mun taught when he was still alive. Generally these Bhikkhus are followers of those Teachers who were themselves direct followers of Venerable Ajaan Mun, living in various localities, and they point out the ways of practice to these Bhikkhus. Some of the places where many *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* in this line of teaching spend the *vassa* period are in Nong Khai Province in the districts of Tha Bo, Si Chiang Mai, Phon Phisai, Bung Kan which are mostly covered by forests and hills. These are the kinds of places that *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* like to stay in to do their practice, but they do not like going where there are no thick forests and few hills. Generally they just pass through the latter places, or at most, stay temporarily at the invitation of the villagers to help them sometimes. Other places where they like to stay are in Nakhon Phanom Province in the districts of Khamchai where it borders on the district of Leung Nokta in the province of Ubon where there are plenty of hills and forests. In the district of Si Songkhram where there is good forest and in the districts of Ban Phaeng and Mukdahan where there are both hills and forests in plenty, the Bhikkhus like going to stay right up to the present day. In Sakon Nakhon Province they like to stay in the district of Sawang Daen Din and Panna Nikhom where there are hills and forests in the southern part of the district. In Udon Province, in the districts of Ban Phu, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Na Klang, Nong Han and Meung, there are hills and forests in plenty, as also in Loei Province in the districts of Wang Saphung and Meung. The *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* like staying in these provinces and districts more than any others in the Northeast of Thailand.[84]

There are still many who are interested in practising the way, fully intent on attaining Dhamma and understanding. Sometimes when there is some special function such as the funeral and cremation of an *Ācariya* in whom they have faith and respect, the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* gather together, as for instance, at the funeral and cremation of Venerable Ajaan Brom at Dong Yen village in the district of Nong Han, Udon Province. They like going to such functions because they expect to hear talk on Dhamma from all the *Ācariyas* whom they respect and revere and who come to this function. Those who have problems in their hearts, associated with their meditation practices have an opportunity at such a time to go and talk and learn about it from the *Ācariyas.* As soon as

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83. See footnote 33 on page 83.

84. Unfortunately, the forests in most of these places have practically disappeared now (2005 CE).

the function is finished they disperse and variously return to the forests and hills where they have been living and doing their practice.

When the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* come together in large numbers they are very impressive to see. One also feels sympathy for the small *Sāmaṇeras* who have come with their *Ācariyas,* and who are more loveable than impressive. We can get some idea of how strong the *cittas* of some of the Bhikkhus are when they go to such occasions as this and we have a chance to talk together about *citta bhāvanā.* We can also do this when they come specially to visit us at other times, and also when we meet them on various other occasions. Because, generally speaking, when *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* meet each other they rarely talk about anything but Dhamma in the heart. Even when they talk for a long time it is only about Dhamma in the heart and they do not bring in any other topic of conversation. After seeing them one feels respect and confidence in them, and great sympathy for each one of them in what they are trying to attain. It makes us feel sure and satisfied that, if there are still those who are interested to practise Dhamma by striving with effort like these Bhikkhus that we have learnt about, they will get the results of what they are doing, so that both they and other people will feel happy and contented that the teaching can be handed on continually into the future, and will surely not be lost and become devoid of fruit. As in the saying of Dhamma:

> *"We have seen, Ānanda, how if there are still those who practise Dhamma in ways that are appropriate to Dhamma this world will not become void of Arahants."*

In the above saying of the Buddha, how does one *"practise Dhamma in ways that are appropriate to Dhamma?"* When one has assessed the essential meaning of this phrase, it means, "whatever is appropriate to oneself". "Appropriateness of Dhamma", means being in accord with the reasoning which is in the Teaching that the Lord Buddha himself taught, which is called the *"Svākkhāta–Dhamma"* — "The rightly taught Dhamma" — which is not deficient anywhere in any way. If it is thought of as a path or a way then it is a path that goes straight to its intended destination without breaking into many tracks and branches to mislead those who go along it. Or if it is likened to food, it is food which is plentiful and perfect, straight from the most skilled cook and complete with its full natural flavours, being not too spicy or salty and well suited to the taste of whoever eats it without exception. Or again, it may be likened to a suit of clothes which are tailor made to fit, being neither too tight nor too

loose, but just right in all cases. Not like those clothes which they make up to fit tightly, which are most unseemly for both men and women to wear. To look at them much is very disturbing and offensive to one's sensibility. So much so that if one were in mourning for three months one would still not be able to forget them, because they are so peculiar and far from the realms of human beings and the gods as well. Thus the appropriateness of Dhamma in all its parts and aspects, is to be assessed by whether it leads onward to the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna.* This alone and no other is to be called "Dhamma which is appropriate" — in other words, appropriate just for the Path and its Fruition, that is all.

Where I wrote above: "... who practise Dhamma in ways that are appropriate to Dhamma...," it means doing practice which accords with those ways of Dhamma which are called: *Supaṭipatti, Ujupaṭipatti, Ñāyapaṭipatti* and *Sāmīcipaṭipatti.* These are what is meant by "appropriateness", not deviating from the way of Dhamma, not going beyond nor falling short of Dhamma, and not modifying or obscuring Dhamma according to one's fancy, as if one was oneself the Great Teacher of all Dhamma. These are what is meant by "practising Dhamma in ways that are appropriate to Dhamma." So if one practises in the manner of *Supaṭipatti, Ujupaṭipatti, Ñāyapaṭipatti* and *Sāmīcipaṭipatti,* it means that one is practising Dhamma in a manner that is truly appropriate to Dhamma, and the results which come from it will be those which one has been led to expect from it, and they are bound to come in this way. It does not have to be within the lifetime of the Lord Buddha, nor during any other particular time or era for these results to arise, for it depends mainly on the practice that is done, and this is more important than any other thing. It is like going along a smooth road, which is the right road going straight to the intended destination. Whether one travels by day or by night, in the dry season or the rainy season, when one does not turn away from this right road one is sure to reach the destination as all others have. Therefore it is important that one should go along the right road, both in the world and in Dhamma. Because the "Dhamma that is appropriate", that we have been talking about, is the *akālika* (timeless) Dhamma, which is always aimed directly towards the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* without there being any time or place which is more favourable than any other. What is favourable is the right Dhamma practice, and this is more important than anything else.

If one does not practise the right Dhamma, it makes no difference what age or time one is in, there is no hope of attaining the results which one should attain, because it contradicts the principle of "practising Dhamma in ways that are appropriate to Dhamma". These wrong ways of practice do not conform to the principle which says, "... appropriate to Dhamma," and they are likely to be an enemy to oneself and to Dhamma as well. The Dhamma that has been taught by the Lord is well suited to all states and situations everywhere and it does not set up any opposition to anything in the world[85] and so it is called, "well taught". Therefore someone who is anxious to attain a satisfactory refuge as a result of their actions, should consider what causes they are currently making and whether or not they conform to the principle of what is "... appropriate to Dhamma". If they do not so conform it means that one has gone astray, that one is without doubt opposing Dhamma and the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna.*

It is hoped that the reader will forgive me for getting diverted from the main theme all the time. As soon as I leave the subject I am dealing with I get carried far away before mindfulness returns, by which time I have gone all over the place. So now I will return and say more about the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus.*

There are many Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus in line from Venerable Ajaan Mun who are still alive, although they rarely come out of the forests and hills. So people who live in towns, or in Bangkok hardly ever get a chance to know how they live nor where and in which provinces, so we have taken the opportunity to let people know some of the provinces and places where they stay. They do not like to stay much in the populated areas of these provinces but prefer to live far away where there are forests and hills and where it is calm and quiet. Such places are far from the places of administration in each province and its districts, and some places cannot be reached by car, whereas others can, with difficulty, for a car has to force its way into the forest through muddy places which become impassable in the rainy season.

Normally, when the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* go anywhere they like to travel in the *Dhutanga* way, which means going about on foot all the time. Walking up one hill, clambering up another, searching for a place to stay and practise *bhāvanā* which suits their temperament. They have little interest in leaving such a place to go to the villages and towns, for they do their practice in a quiet

85. The aim of Dhamma is for each individual to attain *Nibbāna.* The aim isn't about trying to correct and perfect this world, for this would be a futile endeavour.

way which other people do not know about. But those who are *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* in the same way, all know about each other both inwardly and outwardly. Thus they know the whereabouts of the others, which districts of which province, and with how many other Bhikkhus and novices they are staying. These things they know well, because they keep in touch with others frequently. In particular they have faith and respect for the senior *Ācariyas,* and the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* have a great liking for visiting them, paying respect to them and training in Dhamma and its meaning with them and there are always some going and staying with them all the time. As soon as one goes, another comes, changing about, going and coming all the time, both during the dry season and the rainy season, excepting only during the three *vassa* months when it is difficult for those living far away, who have to stop visiting others for the time being. As for those who live close enough to visit each other, they will probably go to see the *Ācariyas* and their friends quite frequently. They go to see the *Ācariyas* to learn about Dhamma with an attitude of faith and reverence for those who are endowed with the quality of Dhamma. The need to visit, to pay homage, and to listen to the various forms of teaching of the *Ācariyas,* whenever the time is appropriate, is looked on as a custom of *Kammaṭṭhāna* which goes back to its origins. Therefore each of them know where the others are staying and what their movements are.

In regard to those whose levels of *citta* and Dhamma are very high, there are still many of them who are living at present. But generally speaking, they are not likely to bring out their "Dhamma wealth" and spend it in an opulent manner, for they act rather like a rich man who does not like to show off. Their possessions, they have and use in the same way as other people and they do not show off nor make out that they are important, causing a lot of fuss. This is the way that those Bhikkhus who are truly intent on Dhamma behave, and each of them in their own way lives quietly, which accords with the characteristics of those who are intent on Dhamma, and they do not like talk which is vain and boastful, which is the way of the world.

The *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* in this lineage (from Venerable Ajaan Mun) have quiet natures and they like quietness in the spheres of the ear, the mouth and tongue, the eye, and the heart. If they are with others who are not truly of their own kind they hardly ever speak about the Dhamma which they have within themselves. So when they hear anyone speaking in a rather boastful way without there being good reason for it, in the manner of someone who likes to

show off, they are likely to get a bit dizzy and feel nauseated. This is the nature of the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* of this lineage, who like to be unassuming and modest in speech and not boastful. For they are not well versed nor familiar with those forms of society which are always given to being pretentious and boastful. In this they generally tend to accept those forms of behaviour which come from their *Ācariya* who taught them to be calm and modest. If anyone were to speak rather big and boastfully the others would all immediately feel sick with stomach ache and want to get away to find medicines to cure it. For amongst those who go the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* nobody is normally boastful. But if by chance anyone is a bit boastful, the others are likely to laugh to themselves and turn and face the wall or go outside into the forest, for fear that they might faint if they put up with it and listened for a long time.

Amongst Bhikkhus of the same group, if one of them is inclined to be boastful, the others all dislike it, for they say he is worse than cats or tigers who know how to hide their claws and fangs better than this raving Bhikkhu. After all, they only spread their claws and fangs in situations that warrant it. But we who are human and also *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* should consider carefully in a refined and subtle way before speaking out. If then we brag boastfully without shame or consideration for the place, people or time, the others may misunderstand and think that such a Bhikkhu is a *Kammaṭṭhāna* monk who knows no shame. All those who are experienced in Dhamma will probably be reluctant to associate with such a monk, thinking of him as being worse than ordinary good lay people. Because of this it is difficult for anyone outside the field of those who equally do the practice, to know the level of *citta* and the level of Dhamma of those who practise — except of course with those who are boastful, and plenty of people will probably know their level already. But they don't ask because they are not interested.

Those Bhikkhus who practise the way properly do not like talking much and tend to keep to themselves, quietly, so as to accumulate Dhamma within themselves more and more all the time. This Dhamma they cherish and guard and they do not like to let it out and spread it about without good reason which would be like picking fruit before it is ripe, or selling things before one has bought them, which is considered to be a bad way of doing things in the world. Those who practise are all, from the lowest right up to the *Ācariyas,* very careful of this, for the reason that speaking about one's own inward Dhamma, which is just one's own "wealth", and telling other people who are strangers

about it, people in whom one has no reason to feel especially confident, is not knowing what is suitable and proper in oneself, in society and in all forms of Dhamma. It is just "selling oneself" instead of doing what is useful and what brings good results.

This not only concerns Dhamma which is by nature entirely subtle, but also the world where decent people who are endowed with the wealth of civilised behaviour know how to be modest and careful. They are not boastful nor do they show off, which would display a vulgarity within them which would be vexatious to other decent people and leave a "bad taste in the mouth". Far more valuable than this is Dhamma, which is the wealth of those who are the wisest in this world, and one should be careful and cautious with it. This is appropriate for one who has a basis of Dhamma in his heart, not letting go of his restraint and scattering it about all over the place as if Dhamma was a thing of little value, which is a sorry sight in the eyes of those who practise the way and all other Buddhists as well.

Those who practise the way therefore keep a proper reserve in themselves and in Dhamma. Even though I who am writing this am not imbued with knowledge as keen as the wisest of men, yet I know how to respect and look up to them. For this is a way of maintaining quiet modesty and humility in oneself so that one does not become haughty and vain, like a monkey that has got hold of a crystal ball without knowing how to use it properly. All he can do is carry it along with him while he swings from branch to branch in the forest at the edge of a deep chasm. After going a short distance, both of them fall into the chasm and both he and the valuable crystal ball are smashed to pieces. This example should make us think, both those who go the way of the world and those who go the way of Dhamma, how we should not be like this monkey with its crystal ball who makes a mess of the world and Dhamma. For this can become a chronic disease spreading into an epidemic which destroys both the world and Dhamma without any foreseeable end.

There are some *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who have only been ordained a few years, yet they practise well and resolutely by themselves, and they are an example and an ornament to those who practise the way well. There are still many of these Bhikkhus, all of whom are amongst the last generation of Venerable Ajaan Mun's followers, and at present they are working hard in themselves to hurry the development of their practice. In the future we will have to rely on these Bhikkhus to be the strength of the *Sāsana* and to be the

leaders when the present *Ācariyas* who are the Elder disciples of Venerable Ajaan Mun have all gone, for this is the natural course of events which we cannot help thinking about. Today, this Bhikkhu or that person dies. In a few days another one dies and so it goes on from day to day, month to month and year to year, and the time comes when it is also this *Ācariya's* time to go. For all these things are unstable and uncertain and each one of us is going about step by step in this world of uncertainty in the same way the whole time. None of us know when we ourselves or anyone else is going to make a false step which may drop us into the pit of *anicca* — in other words death. The *Ācariyas* therefore teach that we ought not to be careless and indifferent to our *sankhāras* — which means ourselves. Those Bhikkhus who are determined and resolute in their striving without letting up or giving way may have had some deep insight into the "law of decay and destruction", which nobody can avoid. Because of this they swim on in all sorts of different ways without giving up or backsliding in their efforts. Sometimes they may have to conform to orders from the local government authorities who ask them to leave the hills for a period because the area is not safe for the Bhikkhus or for other people. This is because of trouble in the local villages when different factions arise which are antagonistic to each other, and amongst them there are both ferocious bad people and also good people but it is not worth the risk of staying there. As soon as the area has become peaceful again and they can go there without fear of danger they will return to live and practise the way as they choose. These Bhikkhus still feel uncomfortable and restricted in having to follow the requests of the authorities by leaving the forests and hills for a more ordinary environment, even though the place where they go to stay is still forest which is fairly quiet and isolated without much disturbance. The reason for this is because of the ease with which they were able to do the practice which always brought results to them in such places. In addition, such places suit the disposition of those whose aim and hope is towards Dhamma and this is strong within their hearts and always present in their characters. So they don't want to depart from those places where they have found happiness and contentment in their hearts. For when they go to another place they feel very uncertain about their practice and whether it is going to be equally as good as they have been accustomed to.

The Hardship of the Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu

The *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* whose heart is intent on attaining that state where there is no discontent *(dukkha),* willingly accepts that he will probably come across nothing but lack and insufficiency in all external things as part of his practice. In other words he likes to go and live in places where things are insufficient and hard to get. But apart from the natural lack of things in the environment where he lives, there is also his own willing intention to go without things and to live a life of poverty. The food which he gets on *piṇḍapāta* may be plentiful, but he only eats a little of it, perhaps only the rice, even though he was given other food as well. He may decide to fast some days or for several days at a time, or perhaps to alternate doing now one way now another. While doing *bhāvanā,* he must look and see what results of calm and skilfulness his *citta* gets in the direction of mindfulness and wisdom. He must watch and define what methods give better results than others. Then he must strive to go that way all the time.

Sometimes he may fast for several days and then eat less than normal. Or else he may eat less than normal for a few days, followed by a complete fast for four or five days and then eat normally or less than normal as he sees fit. In observing the state of the body *(dhātu–khandha)* and of the mind or heart it is necessary to keep a watch on both of them at the same time. If the body feels too tired and weak he should increase his food intake by a reasonable amount, but not as much as the body calls for all at once, for this would depress the *citta* too much. He may for instance increase his food by fifty or sixty percent above the meagre diet that he has been taking. If however he feels that his body is functioning abnormally due to malnutrition, he must stop fasting and dieting entirely for the time being, until his body has had time to recover. After which he may gradually start dieting or fasting again.

Those who are most likely to progress steadily by using these methods are those who are characteristically suited to them. Even though they ought to ease off for the sake of their health when their bodies show signs of malnutrition and weakness, generally the heart does not want to give way. They still want to go on dieting or fasting continually, because they have already seen the resulting development which takes place in the heart every time they do so. But if they have to ease off, they should try to find a balance which is enough to satisfy the needs of the body and the *citta* so that their progress will be smooth in accordance with their intended purpose.

When dieting or fasting for a long period of time it is quite normal for the body to be somewhat hungry, tired and weak, but if they let themselves get troubled and anxious about this hunger and weakness they will not be able to keep on doing it. This is one of the ways in which suffering comes in the practice of *Kammaṭṭhāna,* therefore those *Kammaṭṭhāna* monks who are hoping for calm and happiness of heart will generally have to make themselves accept hardship and poverty the whole time even though they do not like doing it. But their characteristic tendencies and their hope in Dhamma make it essential for them to do and to put up with these things.

It should be understood that where we talked of alternatively fasting and eating or dieting and eating, this did not mean just for one or two months, but trying to keep it up all the time, for years; or until they become quite certain in their own hearts that there is no need to do so any more. Then the *citta* can go on from there comfortably and smoothly without obstruction, they can stop using those methods and revert to more usual ways of practice in regard to the body and mind.

But generally speaking, from what the writer has observed, those things that are called "*kilesa*s", of whatever type and however much or little, are always bound to manifest as our enemies with whatever power they have remaining in our hearts, for never have the *kilesas* been any respecter of persons anywhere at any time. Therefore, those who practise the way and who believe deeply in their hearts that the *kilesas* have been their enemies are not likely to be complacent and let the *kilesas* flourish by being over confident and thinking:

> "The *kilesas* will become our friends and no more will they create poison and harm causing us to experience more suffering and trouble."

Rather do they see full well that:

> "If we destroy them right now, so that none are left, this will indeed be entirely satisfactory and by far better than letting them stay there to bring more harm to us sometime in the future."

This is the fundamental motive which drives them on without let up in striving to follow and round up the *kilesas* in various ways such as by dieting or fasting. For these are methods of helping and supporting their mental striving which makes their practice of *samādhi* very much more easy than normal, and they

are not ready to relax or give up these methods which have always given such good results. In fact it is generally true to say that they are not likely to relax those methods of striving and struggling to climb upwards by training and discipline which they have seen to give good results, even after many years. For there are good and compelling reasons which are bound to make them strive in these ways.

There are many Bhikkhus in this lineage who have used the ways of dieting and fasting to aid their striving by way of the heart. It is probably more effective than other methods such as, not lying down and therefore they have always liked the way of fasting, right up to the present day. If one has already used the methods of dieting or fasting it is also probable that there will be no need to give up lying down, for it will tend to happen of itself without any deliberate intention. This is because dieting and fasting tend to overcome drowsiness and sleepiness which disappear of themselves. They can then spend the whole night without lying down and without feeling drowsy or sleepy as they would when eating food normally. For them, lying down and resting for a while is only for the purpose of gaining strength of body so as not to let it get too weak and exhausted and not because drowsiness compels them to lie down and sleep — not while they are dieting and fasting. For the fact is that after they have been on a diet or have fasted for three or four days, all drowsiness and sleepiness which would otherwise lead them to lie down and sleep disappears. This makes it easy for them as there is no longer any need to force themselves not to sleep. Then concentrating attention and controlling the mind become easy. The *citta* is not so wild and playful in its various accustomed obsessions *(ārammaṇa)* and mindfulness is not so easily lost in forgetfulness. They are then able to know those various situations and things which they come across much more quickly than in normal times when they are not dieting or fasting. When they practise for *samādhi* they are able to drop into a state of calm easily, and in going the way of wisdom they are much more skilful and quick than they normally would be.

These Bhikkhus see the value of dieting and fasting and how it brings advantages and makes it much easier in many ways for those whose dispositions are suited to it. So they endeavour to keep on doing it even though it may bring them more hardships than they would normally encounter, for their inherent tendencies of character bias them to go that way and they must put up with these hardships. They cannot use the method which is both easy and expedient like those who have gone the way of *"Sukhāpaṭipadā khippābhiññā"*

— easy practice and quick insight — for their inherent tendencies are not suitable for this way. They are more likely to be amongst those whose way is *"Dukkhāpaṭipadā dandābhiññā"* — difficult practice and slow insight. Therefore they must go against their inclinations, "swallow" the hardships and take up this way with full commitment so as to "swallow" the calm and happiness — which is *samādhi,* and also to "swallow" the skilfulness which is mindfulness and wisdom down into the heart each time.

They have got to concentrate *dukkha* into the body and heart in a very big way to start with, to the point where they can hardly stand it, and there is also some danger that if their constitutional strength is not enough, they may die before they gain results. When one thinks of the struggling and striving of each one of those who practise the way before they can experience the taste of Dhamma each time, one cannot help but feel deep sympathy for them; for each time they must put up with a lot of deprivation and hardship. It is good however, that there are still some Bhikkhus who are prepared to oppose their natural inclinations and put up with the deprivation and hardships which are necessary all the time in their training and discipline without relaxing or slackening in their striving. But once they have taken a drink of "sunlight and moonlight" from the flow of Dhamma by the way of their practice, they no longer have to put up with the deprivation and hunger experienced in countless lives of all sorts of becoming and birth which the *citta* has grabbed and held on to in its countless wanderings.

If they look into the truth of what the *citta* is bound to come across in the various circumstances which they will surely meet up with in future lives, it will make them feel wearied and sick of carrying these burdens. For they are bound to be born again and again and to experience these things endlessly, unless they hurriedly endeavour to cut them short right now, so that all their heavy burdens may be made lighter, or got rid of entirely — which means that they shed the burden entirely. Seeing in a way that penetrates to the heart just how baneful is this *saṁsāra* which has become bound up with each individual who has made his contract with it entirely by himself, is what makes them resolve to put forward the whole of their strength every time they go down inwardly for the purpose of striving on without giving way, relaxing or weakening and saying that they cannot stand it any more. But in fact they go on with outstanding and earnest determination, fighting for their own salvation to become foremost amongst people. They are not lacking in any aspect of striving, nor are they deficient in putting up with the hardships

in doing their work — their duty. Mindfulness and wisdom, their skill which enables them to fight and destroy their *kilesas* is generated and arises all the time, every minute. Even the greatest *dukkha* is not likely to make them give up in their efforts to be self-restrained, to put up with hardship and to hit back at the *kilesas* until the *dukkha* breaks up and falls away from them and they can emerge from it, no longer ready to accept their own inferiority. This is appropriate for those who are the followers of the Lord of the "Ten Supernormal Insights" *(Dasabalañāṇa)* who was a bold and valiant warrior and who never consented to ease off nor evade these hardships.

However thick and obtusely the body of the *kilesas,* which are *dukkha* and its origin *(Samudaya),* are wrapped around obscuring the sphere of the heart we must strive to undo them, to cut and tear them away by attacking them with mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort which are our weapons, until the wonder of Dhamma becomes apparent, arising in the sphere of the *citta,* such as one has never before experienced even in the remote past. It is the heart itself which is wonderful beyond what one could ever have imagined and after this nothing will ever again be able to hold it in subjection. This is the Dhamma that reaches the "shore of death" as Venerable Ajaan Mun expressed it at the time when he had reached the end point after the fight was over — which has been described in Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography.

It is this Dhamma which all those who practise the way struggle to reach so as to pay homage to it all the time, without weakening in their striving while trying out various methods which in most cases are resolute, severe and ascetic, such as we have mentioned before, but none of these methods give any scope for easing off or relaxation to cure their weariness at all. If the Lord Buddha was still alive and should meet them while they were energetically striving to fight the *kilesas* and all their *dukkha* with patient acceptance of their difficulties, he would surely praise their efforts and encourage them soothingly saying:

> "All of you who are outstanding in your striving for the sake of *Nibbāna,* the Supreme Abode, are followers of the *Tathāgata.* At present you are displaying courage and resolve in fighting against the enemy with all your strength so as to destroy all further becoming and birth by rooting out this tendency from your hearts without giving up, and so that your fame and honour should spread and be proclaimed loudly throughout the three realms

of existence. For are you not striving to dig out the original root which is the chief enemy — in other words *avijjā* the all powerful one who leads beings into birth and death — and doing this with mindfulness and wisdom that is sharp and penetrating? We the *Tathāgata* express our appreciation and approval of this and may you strive to make *Nibbāna* clearly apparent within your hearts quickly, with urgency. The Supreme Dhamma is waiting to fall into your hands, for you are at present strong and clever in the ways of mindfulness and wisdom."

Thus he would lift them up and encourage them to increase their resolve by speaking soothingly to them so as to arouse strong and lasting faith and a fighting spirit by using gentle words. He would gently and persuasively talk to them, increasing their strength of resolve by expressing his appreciation of the striving of these "sons of the *Sākya*" who are going to reach *Vimutti* Dhamma in their hearts in a short while. For they will bring the wonder of Dhamma to the world to cure the sorrow, grief and confusion of all people who are in a state of trouble and turmoil with the *kilesas* and *taṇhā* which spread a coating of poison everywhere. For there is no cure for this apart from the cleansing power of the Dhamma remedy, which goes down to the heart as given by those who have the wonder of Dhamma within themselves.

As for those Bhikkhus who should be able to gain victory over the enemy because of their persistent striving, the Lord Buddha is not likely to come to express his appreciation nowadays, for he has already attained *Parinibbāna* and there are no longer any bodily constituents left. But the Lord's pure heart is a constant presence which is unshakeable, even beyond death, giving assurance that:

"Whoever sees Dhamma sees the *Tathāgata*."

What we have repeated in the foregoing passages is some further explanation of the ways of striving associated with dieting or fasting as done by those Bhikkhus who practise with resolve in this way. As for the results which they should get from this, may the reader try it and find out for himself by following the gist of what we have already explained above. I who am writing this am quite certain about the practices which are described herein, both in regards to those things which are to be done — the causes — and also the results which come from them, that they are in harmony with each other.

Because those things which have been described are things which I have done and practised and gained results from. Therefore I have written about them so that those who are interested may also take them up and practise them, and maybe gain the same kind of results.

Sitting in Samādhi For Many Hours

Those Bhikkhus who like to train and discipline themselves in other ways, such as sitting in *samādhi* practice for many hours on some occasions, use this to train themselves according to circumstances. I consider that sitting for long periods of time brings more *dukkha* and torment than any other method, due to the unpleasant feelings which bombard those who do this practice. If mindfulness and wisdom are not able to keep up with the painful feelings which concentrate together to attack them so strongly that they can hardly find anywhere in the body and mind to relax they are not likely to be able to go on resisting them and sitting there much longer. The "throne of *samādhi*" which is usually well polished will break away within a few hours without any ceremony. Because the painful feelings quickly spread to all parts of the body both big and little. Even the backs of the hands and feet feel as if they are on fire, all of which makes them anxious and restless both physically and mentally. As for what goes on inside the body, it seems as if every one of their bones where they are joined to each other, are about to break apart and separate, for the pain is spread throughout the body. Apart from this, their hearts become agitated with the fear that the body is just about to die at any moment. So they are in trouble both in the body and in their hearts, afraid that they will not be able to stand up to it much longer.

The painful feeling which comes at that time will arise and die away three times before reaching the most intense and painful period. Each time it arises, it remains quite a long time before it calms down and subsides on its own without anything being done to reduce it or make it easier to put up with. After it has calmed down and eased off giving a short respite it then begins once again, and this happens three times. Each of these periods of painful feeling must arise and establish themselves and penetrate throughout the body in all its parts both big and small, then it remains there for some time until it gradually dies away and becomes calm. But when they reach the fourth period

which is the period of the great "*dukkha vedanā*"— or one may call it the period in which the armed forces of the great *dukkha* reach right up to the "throne" where one is sitting in *samādhi* at that time, one may reckon that the army of the great *dukkha* has reached one's self. Every part of the body will then be as if it were burning in a mass of flames; externally, as if it was being roasted over a fire and internally, as if it was being beaten by hammers and stabbed with sharp steel daggers. It seems that the whole body is in agony, as though about to break apart and fall into bits until it becomes dust, dispersing and spreading apart due to the power of the pain and torment which is burning and destroying every part of it.

From the moment when this greatest *dukkha vedanā* becomes established in the body, one has no time to move about or fidget so as to get some relief in one's body at all, for there is nothing left but pressing and squeezing and smashing and beating it to bits. Up to this time the *citta* may have been contemplating other aspects of Dhamma, but now it will have to withdraw from it so as to turn mindfulness, wisdom and all its strength to enquire into the question of one's life, and to do this in real earnest. Otherwise the body and mind will become a sea of flame, because these most excruciating painful feelings are "trampling the body under foot" and destroying it, and at the same time disturbing one's heart, making it quiver and shake with the fear of death. One fears that one will not be able to withstand it, for it seems to oneself that this body is turning into a mass of fire and there is no part of it where one can put one's attention, and relax, that has not been affected by this painful feeling.

From the start when they first sit down up to the time when the period of the most painful feeling just begins it is probable that anyone doing this who has not yet experienced this last stage, will not know which is the lesser and which is the greater of these periods of pain. It is quite likely that they will assume one of the lesser periods to be the greatest possible, whereas in fact they are merely its "offspring" and the greatest one is still dormant, yet to wake into activity. But those who have already been through it before know straight away which period of feeling is which, for the most painful of them will only appear after about five or six hours. Before this there are only minor periods of painful feeling which are rather like children coming to play and tease and make a nuisance of themselves. But those who have never sat for long periods of time and who have never met such feelings before should begin to meet up

with the "children and relatives" of painful feeling in the early stages — in other words, in the first two or three hours. This brings *dukkha* and restlessness from that time on and if mindfulness and wisdom are not able to catch up with this situation and correct it one may not be able to withstand it and go on sitting much longer. Then one may dismantle the "throne of *samādhi*" within the first two or three hours and feel satisfied that one has withstood the period of maximum painful feeling until one could stand it no more — even though this period of maximum *dukkha* has in fact not yet even started and one has not truly reached the stage when one can break away from it.

But those who are used to sitting in *samādhi* meditation who have experienced calm of the *citta* enough to know about it and who are also used to sitting for fairly long periods of time — such as three or four hours regularly will probably have known and experienced feelings of *dukkha* of various kinds to some extent. If they have not experienced the final period of the greatest *dukkha,* they will probably say that the lesser forms of *dukkha* which arise two or three times and then die away and become calm, are the greatest *dukkha.* But once they have truly met and experienced the greatest period of *dukkha,* those lesser forms will seem to be quite mild, because the differences between the two is very great — like an elephant compared with a cat!

When the greatest period of pain has arisen, it seems as if every part of the body hurts and aches with pain all over, as if it really is just about to break up and fall to bits right then and there. The heat on the backs of one's hands and feet is very intense, as though someone had built a fire on them to cook up some food, and the bones in the various parts of the body are as if someone has taken a hammer and is hitting them and pounding them until they all break up. Because the painful feelings become so excruciatingly severe and all embracing until in the end there is nowhere that one can put the body and the *citta* to get any relief, for the whole of it seems to be a mass of fire. The only things which can stand up to it at that time are mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort, aided by patient endurance which supports one's refusal to give up and withdraw one's forces and lose the battle to the enemy who is fighting with every bit of power that he has, as though he is going to smash one to bits and grind one to powder right then without giving one any chance of survival. When it is driven into a corner such as this, the *citta* cannot find any way to escape and it is forced to dig in and fight as a matter of life and death, using mindfulness and wisdom to get at the truth of the body and *citta* which it may only come to know and experience by means of striving.

Wishing that the painful feelings should stop and disconsolately thinking that one will not be able to stand up to it are aspects of "*samudaya*" — the cause of *dukkha* — which enhances *dukkha,* making it stronger and more intense. At this time one must under no circumstance allow thoughts of this kind if one does not want to lose out in a graceless unseemly manner. All one has left is mindfulness and wisdom which one must arouse by using various skilful means to cope with the feelings which arise at that time, by discriminating between the body, feelings and the *citta,* examining them and comparing them side by side — until one knows the truth of each of them quite clearly by means of wisdom.

In separating out the body from the others, one should go to the focal point where *dukkha* seems to be stronger than elsewhere and single it out for investigation. Thus for example, if a bone in the leg, or the knee is the most painful, one fixes one's attention on that place and establishes mindfulness to investigate it with wisdom, by questioning:

> "Is this bone really the pain, or is the pain this bone? If the bone is really the pain, why does the bone not disappear when the pain goes? For if the two are identically the same, both must go together in order to conform to the truth of nature. Furthermore, after a person has died, all painful feeling in the body is at an end, yet the bones are still there, and when the body is taken away and cremated, do the bones give rise to any pain or not? If they do not give rise to any *dukkha* in the sense of painful bodily feeling at all, right up to the point when the fire burns them down to ashes, to think as people usually think, that the bone itself is the pain when this is evidently not the case should make one ashamed in the face of the bones and all the other parts of the body which have similar characteristics. For none of them are the painful feeling itself in the way that people talk about them. And again, if the pain and the bone were truly the same thing, this bone has been there since the time one was born, so why does the pain only rise at times, such as while sitting here in *samādhi?* Why is the pain not continuous, much as the bones themselves are continuous, being joined one to another as they have been since the beginning? This being the case, to believe that this bone is *dukkha* or that *dukkha* is the same thing as this bone is bound to be false — a belief which contradicts the truth — which should make one feel quite ashamed in the face of the truth which does not conform to one's beliefs and assumptions at all."

While one is disentangling the bones and feelings so as to find out the truth about them, the *citta,* mindfulness and wisdom must be fully attentive and truly committed to what they are doing. One cannot afford to let the *citta* go elsewhere, for one must be fully involved with what one is investigating, and one must go on investigating going back and forward and all over it until one understands it clearly. It does not matter how many times one goes over the problem, but only that one goes on investigating until one understands, which is the main purpose of what one is doing. When one has understood quite clearly in regard to one part of the body, the *citta* will probably penetrate all the other parts of the body which have the same characteristics, automatically, on its own.

After doing that he will go straight on to separate feelings from the *citta* without any break, to examine them and compare them together, looking into them in detail, thoroughly, with mindfulness and wisdom. This is done in the same kind of way as was used to separate the body from feelings for investigation, by putting up questions to ask oneself, such as:

> "The *citta* is the same as feeling, or feeling is the same as the *citta,* is this true? If the *citta* is truly feeling, as I have supposed, when painful feeling dies away and disappears, why does the *citta* not also die away with it? And if feeling is identically the same as the *citta,* then whatever way the *citta* goes, this painful feeling must go along with it and it cannot die away and disappear. But in fact, painful feelings both arise and cease while the *citta* goes on, knowing and being the *citta* throughout time, for it does not die away together with feeling? This being the case, does it not contradict the truth and make one ashamed in the face of the truth to stick to the view that the *citta* and feeling are one and the same? — or to think in a way that "swallows the truth" so that it turns into falsehood, and goes the way of crazy, wild forms of knowledge and understanding such as this?"

To analyse and distinguish between the body and feeling, or between the *citta* and feeling, it is essential for mindfulness and wisdom to move about quickly, with agility throughout the field of the work that one is doing. One cannot let them go out to anything else at that time for the more intense the painful feeling becomes, the more must mindfulness and wisdom go on investigating it without stopping, in order to come to know those things which one wants to know, to see and to understand. Whether the feeling becomes more in-

tense, or abates or disappears, it is important that one should know it clearly in the sphere of one's investigation. It is also important that one must not be anxious for the *dukkha* to disappear before one's investigation has brought understanding of the truth of the body, feeling and the *citta* and how they are each different and separate from one another.

What in fact is the truth about oneself? To find out one must go on investigating until one understands the body, feeling and the *citta*. After having truly understood by means of mindfulness and wisdom, one will have realised that:

> "The body is just the body and one no longer accepts the usual view that it is *dukkha* and feeling. Feeling is just feeling and again, one no longer accepts the view that it is the body and *citta*. Even the *citta* is just the *citta* and one no longer accepts the view that it is body and feeling in the way that one used to think, based on the mere assumption and guesswork that one had before one did this investigation and came to understand the situation."

As soon as mindfulness and wisdom have thoroughly investigated all sides of the problem, all painful feeling disappears immediately and it never gets worse than that on any future occasion. The *citta* then goes down into an absorbed, concentrated state which is fully integrated such that it accepts no stimulus at all.[86] Or it may happen that the *citta* does not actually go down into absorbed concentration to the point where it is fully integrated and quiescent, but it still does not get any disturbance from feeling. In other words, the body is real, feeling is real, the *citta* is real, each is real in itself and each of them exists in its own way in accordance with its true nature. At this time when each is real in its own way, one will see the wonder of the *citta* and how valiant it is, in that it has been able to pull one away from all feeling in the most wonderful, incredible way. In addition there also arises an imperturbable courage in the face of any "life or death" situation which one comes across, nor does any fear arise any more. This is because at that moment one saw clearly for oneself what the nature of feeling is and how it has deceived one and made one afraid of life and death. After that, however intense feeling may become, the heart is

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86. Lit: "... the *citta* does not receive any knowing at all." In other words, any knowing of the five external senses and the mind's own thought, imagination and memory images.

able to examine it in the same way as it has already done so and understood its nature. To know and see in this way is to know and see the truths of Dhamma *(Sacca–Dhamma)* with true mindfulness and wisdom. Even though one may not know and see the level of unshakeable resolve which attacks the *kilesas* causing them to fall and be utterly destroyed, yet it will penetrate to the core of the *kilesas* without their being able to offer any resistance. So one must depend on this method as the one to use for one's further development.

Those who have the courage to fight against painful feeling by using this method of investigation are not likely to pull back their army and give up the throne without being able to find a way out. They are without doubt bound to grasp victory by using this method, as well as coming to see the fresh and new footprints of the Great Master (*Sāsadā* — the Buddha) and his disciples *(Sāvakas),* one by one on the path along which they went. In this, they may also be inclined to forget that the Lord attained *Parinibbāna* more than 2500 long years ago, because the "Truth" is the same thing as the "Great Teacher — the *Sāsadā*". For the real *"Sāsadā"* is not limited to time, place or people all of which have changed and gone and which we look upon as being far away in the past, separated from us by more than 2500 years. But we should realise that wherever the "Truth" is, there also is the *"Sāsadā",* because Dhamma arises from the Truth which has been investigated and fully comprehended — and by no other means.

Therefore, those who are able to investigate painful feeling until they reach the truth of the body, feeling and the *citta* will steadily come to see Dhamma quite clearly, and this Dhamma does not depend on the time or the place to prove its validity. This is illustrated in the recorded teachings of Dhamma where it says:

> "Behold Ānanda, if the practice of Dhamma is still being done in a way that is appropriate to Dhamma, the world will not be void of *Arahants*."

And this is the teaching which has just been taught and the sound of it has gone just a moment ago. For the true Dhamma does not depend on the right time or the right moment, because in truth it is always there, and nothing is superior to the "Truth" throughout the Threefold Universe.

This explanation of the method of investigating painful feeling is only a brief summary which should be enough to show the way to those who have the characteristics of a warrior, a fighter whose aim is to salvage himself and

curtail further birth and death. Not one who gives up and lets his future births be endless, haphazard and scattered about in the various possible realms of birth. For his aim is that of *vimutti* — freedom — freedom from all concern about the mass of *dukkha,* great or small in the endless future. For this is what causes so much anxiety and is such a burden to the heart. So in order to search for a way-out he uses the method of investigation by taking up this mass of *dukkha* which is there in the *khandhas.* Like an abrasive stone, for sharpening up his mindfulness and wisdom so that they becomes very keen. Then depending on skilful expedients, to change and cure himself by all sorts of methods, of which there are so many kinds that it would be quite impracticable to mention all the details of them here. Because the investigation into every Dhamma requires a technique which each individual must devise and use for his own liberation.

One who tends towards contemplation and reflective thought will find the way of escape from the mass of *dukkha* in the prison of the round *(vaṭṭa)* of *saṁsāra. Nibbāna* will be his dwelling place, with eternal peace and happiness. But those who are afraid of *dukkha* may refuse to do any investigation, which is like keeping a thorn that has become buried in one's foot and letting it stay there and get worse until it suppurates and becomes infected, painful and throbbing, so that one lies down groaning. It may even get worse than this until it causes damage to the foot so that it becomes useless, disabled and lame. On the other hand, those who see the danger hurry to pull out the thorn and get rid of it, and however much it may hurt they put up with the pain while pulling it out. Then they know that the pain won't last long and it will all heal up in a few days. By doing this, the pain does not go on causing torment for long, and the day soon comes when it is all healed and they become free from all *dukkha* and trouble. And this is because of their courage in facing up to *dukkha* so as to bring happiness *(sukha)* to themselves. We may reckon that people who act like this make blessings and good fortune for themselves that is rightly directed and as it should be.

Those who have the courage to fight and to investigate the painful feelings within the *khandhas,* act in a similar way, for however much *dukkha* they have, they are able to go on investigating it until they know that they have reached the whole truth, and they don't keep holding on to this *dukkha* to start a fire to burn themselves for a long time to come. That which we call *Nibbāna* will be their treasure bringing satisfaction to their hearts one day for sure and this is bound to be so.

The Lord said that *dukkha* should be defined and known — defined until it is truly self-evident to the heart — as we have already explained above. This is called: "Defining, knowing and abandoning the two Truths *(sacca)*" — these being *dukkha* and the cause of *dukkha (Samudaya),* by means of the Path *(Magga)* — which means, mindfulness and wisdom, both of which work together at the same time to extract the defilements. The Lord said:

> "*Dukkha* should be defined and known and the cause of *dukkha* should be abandoned."

But if one does not bring in mindfulness and wisdom, both of which are factors of the Path, to define, know and get rid of them, what else can one use to do this? *"Nirodha"* is the quenching of the defilements and the whole mass of *dukkha.* But in order that there may be a way for the quenching of *dukkha,* it is essential for mindfulness and wisdom to be brought in and put to work. When this is done, *dukkha* will at the same time be steadily reduced until finally it is completely eliminated due to the power of the Path. So this can show us a way of escape from *dukkha.*

The inter-relationship between all four of the Noble Truths is therefore of such a nature that they cannot functionally be separated. They must all work together simultaneously like a chain, from beginning to end. Whatever strength the mindfulness and wisdom which are factors of the path, may have, they will weaken the various *kilesas* accordingly. So that they even come to the point of *Nirodha* — the cessation of all the *kilesas* and *dukkha* — which gradually quenches them in accordance with the strength of the Path, until finally there are no *kilesas* or *dukkha* remaining within. Then a state of complete purity arises inside, without there being any need to go and look for it anywhere else, for it is right there in the heart which is completely free of all *kilesas.* This is what is meant by the "Real Buddha", the "Real Dhamma", and also the "Real *Sangha*" which is this state of Purity. What is "Dhamma"? It is this state which is the "True Dhamma", which the world has always paid homage to and longed for through past ages.

Those whose aim and desire is to experience and see what is meant by the "Real Dhamma", in a way which goes deeply into the heart, should not overlook or neglect the training of the heart which is always ready to become Dhamma throughout at any time. But how can we interpret the real meaning of the word "Dhamma"? We can go on finding meanings for it until we "reach

the seashore", without ever being satisfied. We can try to explain its meaning with as much imagination and skill as we like, but our doubts will never be set to rest in this way. Like someone who has never seen the "finest jewels of the first water". He may look at photographs of them and pictures of them piled as high as a mountain, but they are still only pictures of them and not the real jewels themselves, so they cannot get rid of his uncertainty or bring him any satisfaction. For this can only be brought about by seeing the genuine finest "jewels of the first water" as they actually are. So it is with Dhamma, the nature of which remains deep and mysterious while we have not yet found it, for it matters not how much we read or learn about Dhamma, it will still be like the pictures of those precious jewels being shown to someone who has never seen the real thing — it will never bring us real satisfaction.

In order to get rid of our uncertainty as to the real nature of Dhamma, we should learn all about the heart, which is the direct way to learn about Dhamma. The more we learn and know of the heart, the more we get to know about the real nature of Dhamma — until we come to the point where we know Dhamma throughout, in our own hearts. When our hearts know the complete story quite clearly, all our doubts and uncertainty will be set to rest immediately and doubt will never arise again.

As to the question, "What is Dhamma?" It is that which we know and see just here in our own hearts; what else could it be and where could it come from? But although we know it full well in our own hearts, when we come to try and explain this true Dhamma as it really is, there is no way to do so at all, and all we can do is to use similes and talk a lot. It is like getting an irritation in one's throat, one does not know how to scratch it or to get at the sore spot. However one scratches, one can only do so externally and one can never reach the actual spot, even though one knows in one's mind where it is quite clearly.

Therefore it follows that, what we call Dhamma is of a very recondite, subtle nature in the understanding of people everywhere, and there have always been many who are confused and uncertain and who ask bothersome questions about it. But there has never been anybody who can explain it in a way that others can understand sufficiently well to make them feel fully satisfied. There is also no likelihood that this situation will change in the future. But those Bhikkhus who practise the way and discipline themselves strictly and unremittingly, such as by sitting and fighting painful feeling with never-

relaxing mindfulness and wisdom without giving up, are likely to find that Dhamma, which is so difficult to interpret and explain, much more quickly than would normally be possible.

Most of the Ācariyas whose Dhamma is determined and resolute and who come to teach the way to others, have attained it by methods such as we have outlined above, far more than by the usual methods of developing gradually little by little. When they come to teach others they are also likely to do so in ways that are characteristic of the methods which they used in their own training — teaching in forceful, provocative ways, both as to their manner of speaking, the tone of their voices and the Truth of Dhamma, all of which blend together — as they did with Venerable Ajaan Mun for example. But those who are determined to reach the true Dhamma find that when they listen to such teaching, it reaches their hearts and brings results, much more than with the more usual forms of teaching.

I who am writing this am a forest monk with inherently rough characteristics. So my temperament is such that I like the assertive, determined way of teaching which is never insipid. The *kilesas* are still very coarse, so I like what is hard and rough. The heart then submits easily and is afraid to be high spirited, arrogant and provocative. Like when I used to think that I was more bold, fearless and clever than my teacher, while I had still not met anything hard and penetrating to cut me down to size. Venerable Ajaan Mun knew the nature of such smart useless people and how they would only give way to strong corrective methods frequently applied, rather than more mild and gentle methods. After having taken this special, powerful and penetrating medicine, such people only have to hear the sound of Venerable Ajaan, or even just his name, for the busy meddlesome ones[87] to crouch in submission or run into hiding faster than a monkey, which is the best thing that could happen and entirely appropriate. Even now, this busy meddlesome one here, is still afraid of Venerable Ajaan and dare not "swing from branch to branch" in a most daring and exciting way, for the moment he recalls Venerable Ajaan he submits and gives way immediately.

87. "Ones" refers to the "meddlesome monkeys" that most people have within them, for their minds are full of opinions, views and a full-hearted conceit that they can do pretty much anything and everything much better than anyone else.

When one talks about the inner Dhamma with those Bhikkhus who like to go wandering in search of wild places to practise the way; or those who like to go and stay in lonely places which arouse fear; or those who like to fast for the purpose of increasing their efforts as much as possible; or those who like to practise *samādhi* for long periods of time and to tackle painful feeling using mindfulness and wisdom; or those who like to train and discipline themselves in various other ways, such talk is truly wonderful to hear in a way that is impossible to describe. For the Dhamma which they relate each time is Dhamma which has truly arisen from the heart, and whether it is strange, peculiar or wonderful, it is rare to hear such things. When relating these things, if one watches their behaviour they will be seen to be solemn and well controlled, which suggests that what is within them is awesome and in keeping with the true Dhamma which flows out of them and which makes one have profound confidence and faith in them. But when they are with other people in general, they behave as if they are fools who know nothing about the ways of Dhamma at all. They speak little and have no liking for associating with others, preferring to live by themselves, alone. They like to go about on their own and dislike giving talks on Dhamma or talking with others in general — as if they truly know nothing at all.

When however these Bhikkhus are with their intimate friends and they talk together, the listener can hardly keep up with what they say. One can hardly imagine where the Dhamma comes from, for it comes out in a torrent like water flowing free of all restriction, and without ever repeating themselves. Each time one listens to them, they speak about different aspects of the Dhamma which is entirely within them. When one thinks about it, it would seem probable that the day and time will come when they know Dhamma arising in their hearts continually, which is fitting for those who strive diligently and have no fear of death and do not look on the cemetery as being their final conclusion. For when they reach the end of their lives, whatever *sankhāras* are still there, they will probably dispose of them without any longings or regrets. How different this is from the average run of people — as different as the earth and sky!

In eating food, whatever they get is good enough. In dwellings, wherever they rest and sleep, it is good enough. However things go with them, it is good enough and they are not concerned or anxious about how it is going to be in the future, or how it has been in the past. They are light and unburdened, their

ears are very keen, and their hearts are firm and resolute — as if a diamond were buried in them. When they walk *"caṅkama"* they go on for many hours, either by night or by day for they resolutely strive as if it was all one night for them. When they sit in *samādhi bhāvanā,* their bodies are like a post and they remain there for many hours. For they act as if something unusual and wonderful had arisen in them, or so it seems to us who see them and admire all their ways and find nothing in them that we should blame. In fact, they are good examples to all of us in all their ways and actions.

With such people as described above, even if they were full of *kilesas,* the defilements would all be destroyed by this kind of effort. If the *kilesas* were physical beings, they would all be lying dead in great heaps. Some would die where the Bhikkhus walk *"caṅkama",* some where they sit in *samādhi,* some near the trees which they shelter under, some on rocky ground where they sit in the open, some at the mouth of a cave, under overhanging cliffs, in jungle graveyards, in the places they sit, stand and walk striving to practise the way, and some of the *kilesas* would die where they lie down to sleep under the mosquito net; this is how it would be all round the place where they do their work. In fact if the *kilesas* were living beings with physical bodies like animals and people, the forest, where the Bhikkhus work to get rid of them, would be frightful graveyards full of all sorts of cadavers, ghosts and fearful spirits, killed by the force of striving in various ways, until it would become impossible to cremate and bury all of them. If any timid person, afraid of ghosts, were to go to such a place they could hardly breathe and must get out quick and go home because of the ghosts of the *kilesas* that had been killed and destroyed by those who were not afraid of death in the battle of the "round of *saṁsāra*". In fact there is a very large number of them including those that died in the past and in recent times, by being beaten out and forced out, all over the place making a sorry sight such as we would never have seen before. But those who destroyed all these various kinds of *kilesas* by means of their striving, gained happiness and contentment and cured all their worries, concerns, depression and melancholy states, and happily enjoyed their great inner wealth which is so excellent and theirs alone. Nothing ever gets into it to cause disturbance and trouble, which is so different from wealth in the outside world, for all that one possesses is just waiting to slip through one's hands and disappear for all sorts of reasons. For one may lose one's wealth by frittering it away and destroying it oneself, by thieves stealing it, or by countless predators of

all sorts; so that in sleeping, sitting down, or whatever else one does, one is anxious, because one must watch and guard it all the time. Even then, wealth is also a danger to its owner in another way, as in the Dhamma aphorism: *"Lobho dhammānaṁ paripantho"* — greed *(lobha)* is a danger to Dhamma — in other words, to all forms of calm and peace. Those forms of Dhamma which are what we call calm and happiness are not likely to be able to develop and thrive as they should in one whose heart is infected by greed, which is bound to destroy and wipe out all that he has without remainder.

Therefore those who are anxious to gain happiness and increase of heart with Dhamma as their rest and support must think well about themselves and look on greed with apprehension as being a great destroyer. They must also be strict, unyielding and firm with that which is always waiting for a chance to destroy the Dhamma which is within their hearts, and they must never be easy and give way to it, letting it take charge of them — for it can lead to their death, even while they are still living.

11

The Nature of Greed & Fighting Pain and Kilesas

The Baneful Nature of Greed

If one is forgetful and careless of oneself and welcomes greed *(lobha)* without inhibition, it will be like an animal which lays in wait to destroy the world, for it has never done any good to anyone. Like a disease which is much feared by the world, and is very difficult to treat and cure if it has once got a hold of anyone. It is a type of disease in which those people who have got it can give up all hope of ever curing it while they are still alive. All they can do is to wait for the day when they reach the end of this life — and die.

Whatever else the world wants, apart from wealth, there is no hope of getting it from this disease. Therefore, those who hope to get what is truly valuable as an insurance so that they may live in safety, free from dangers, at ease and relaxed both now and in the future should begin to think and consider this matter deeply so as to see how evil greed is. For it is full of evil throughout — worse than a bomb which explodes and spreads destruction all about. Because when a bomb goes off it makes plenty of noise and disturbance and it displays its power so that everyone knows about it and they are afraid and hurry and find shelter as fast as they can to allay their fear and save themselves.

But greed does not display itself in this way. Rather it tends to set up subtle traps deep in the hearts of people of all races, colours and nationalities. It is

even there in the *Sangha,* from the *Sāmaṇeras* up to the *Mahātheras;* and in the lay followers as well, for it is not in the least ashamed of getting in where it can. For if their hearts are low and base enough for it to take hold of them it is bound to force its way in and immediately turn them into its means of satisfaction — its servants. Then it sets up a production unit in their hearts, forcing those who are strong willed and resolute to go into training until they are experienced and skilful, after which they are made to go out to work, to think and search out all sorts of ways to make money and become wealthy. It matters not whether they get it by right — or wrong, crooked and illegal ways. All that matters is that it satisfies the "boss" — greed — who sets his expectations of reward so high that the heart which has a normal awareness of good and evil, right and wrong, such as people have everywhere, feels that it cannot go against it and reduce its expectations. Then the boss passes on the responsibility for doing this to its most favoured servant — the heart — which does the work of thinking out how to do it and passing on instructions to the body and speech faculties to go about acting and searching for profit. Each one does this in his own way and direction, both near and far, inwardly and outwardly, over water and land, by day and by night, whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down, all the time, the only exception being when they go to sleep. We can see them in various places where they congregate together in large numbers, both "raking in" the wealth, as well as bringing suffering down upon others without any concern for who they might be. They are not afraid to think, speak and act both openly and in secret, without feeling the least bit ashamed or afraid that anyone may blame or criticise them. Nor are they afraid of other people's hatred, resentment and anger. All they want is to profit by following the teaching of the great powerful one — which is *"Lobho dhammānam paripantho"* — and this is the refuge which makes them feel satisfied.

As far as safe-guarding what they have gained so that it does not leak out and slip far away from their grasp, "Master Greed" must tell them to store it securely, without thinking about how wide the world is and whether there will be enough space to keep it all. But they store it and accumulate it all until they forget to consider whether — "We are upholders of the sky and earth, immortal gods who know not death" — or whether — "We are people whose end is in the graveyard just like everyone else — or what kind of people are we?" Because it casts a magic spell over them which closes their ears, their

eyes and their minds so tightly that they never get a chance to even glance at the faces of their "bosses" to see what kind of a secret this is that they have together.

In addition, the nature of this greed leads them to display external characteristics which are not good to see. It makes no difference what the sex, nationality, race, colour or class of the person is, nor how much power and influence he has, what he displays are characteristics that nobody likes to see — for they fill people with loathing and repulsion. For in fact this is likely to lead to nothing but the downfall and ruin of the world, because the fire of greed spreads to burn and engulf everything so that nobody will be able to find shelter to withstand it.

For reasons, which we already know and see — which are obvious in our sight and mind — reasons which are not at all secret or obscure, the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha should be accepted, affirmed and promoted as the *"Svākkhāta–Dhamma"* [88] which has been so well and truly taught. Thus in the example of greed, the Dhamma of the Lord teaches that it is a danger which disturbs the peace and happiness of people who live together socially. In saying that greed is a danger, the Lord did not mean that it should only apply at that time when he said it, for this Dhamma has been known in the world for a long time, together with this religion which has taught it to the world. The world should therefore know, or at least be able to assess that greed has been a danger to the world for ages, just as it has been taught in the Dhamma which has also been with us for a long time. So people should be aware to some extent of its evil nature even if only in brief flashes of inspiration, for this is enough to bring them calm and happiness for a short time so that they are not always in blind darkness. This hazard which is called greed, has never brought blessings and benefit to anyone at all anywhere, and even though the whole world may praise it and think that it is good, all the results which in fact come from it are not what people expect or imagine they will be. For those results are bound to follow this same course as they have since the remote past in a fixed manner without any variation. So the wisest of people destroy the evil of greed and then live in happiness — which is so different from us ordinary people who lead each other to develop greed and make it thrive and increase its power until there is hardly any room left for it to increase further in the whole world. If greed were a physical thing like objects and things everywhere, the world would surely be inundated by greed

88. See footnote number 64 on page 149.

objects with nowhere left to put anything else. Because people are making more of it in various ways all the time and using it openly until they forget themselves and lose all sense of shame in the face of their nature which is that of a human being and usually extolled as being a high state, inherently clever and instilled with moral behaviour.

Even if they were to search for wealth and get it, piled as high as a mountain under the influence of greed, which goes about leading them on and directing them to go after it in evil ways, such people would get no happiness for the rest of their lives. And they would die in vain having wasted their lives looking after masses of suffering for which their greed led them to be energetic in accumulating it in large quantities — which is a sorry thing to happen. As for themselves they feel no apprehension, but other people feel afraid for them, for this is not a thing about which people can afford to be careless or indifferent. For when the time comes for the fire to start burning and destroying, it will do so truly without regard for status or rank. For every part of the world both small and large seems to be boiling and getting hotter and more disturbed everyday. In fact it seems to be accelerating because of greed which is like an engine, a prime mover, that drives everything else which has got to follow and cannot resist or stand on its own. What else but greed has such regal power to make the world run around doing its bidding until nobody is ever his own master. Nothing else but *lobha* (greed) has been raised up so high and established as the great lord and master over the hearts of people at the present time. What we have here called *"Lord Lobha"* is the one that has greed for anything and everything at random without selecting or choosing. All that is necessary is that there should be a liking for something for it to arise. Even the moon up in the sky has been laid claim to by people who were forced by greed to go up there and "take it" and stick a flag in it to indicate that they were the owners without feeling in the least afraid or ashamed that someone might laugh at them. In fact it is sensual craving *(kilesa–kāma)* that is not afraid and does not turn away from sensual things. Once it finds a liking for anything it becomes so greedy for it that it cannot have enough of it and even if it means facing death it will put up with it, right up to the end of life without giving up. Even though it has things which support it, piled up until the owner is inundated by them and the greed cannot be seen under them, it is still not afraid of the burden. Even if it meant that it would break its back carrying this load it is not afraid and it never retracts.

The words "retract" or "enough" are words which this type never utters, because its "stomach" is not made of skin and flesh such as people and animals have, but it is made of insatiable greed for which there is never "enough". So the heart and greed can live together, go about together and compete with others sufficiently well so that they can both reach wherever they are going, together without being afraid of a burst stomach, a broken back, that the body may die and that they may end in disgrace without having any virtue at all.

Those necessities of life, whatever they may be, greed goes about acquiring and raking them in to fill up the heart. If the heart were like any other vessel it would have burst and been thrown away as garbage long ago. But the heart is of an immaterial nature *(nāma–dhamma)* which is tough and durable for it has been able to stand up to birth and life in all forms for a long time. So it can stand up to these conditions well enough and is not likely to be destroyed by all these baneful things which destroy everything else and which are associated with the heart all the time. But even then we are still not roused up enough to think more about the importance of the *citta* than about those things which destroy everything. Therefore, even though the heart is what brings us the greatest boons and benefits, it is generally forgotten, like something thrown away and left to go the way of nature and there are few who give it the attention that they ought to. But those things which are enemies of the heart are generally exalted and praised by people of all classes, so day by day they become more skilled and penetrating, and they steadily drag the heart down and bruise it and debase it all the time. Never can the heart be free even for a few moments such that it could know that — "Now there is a chance for the heart to get a bit of peace and happiness and freedom from all those oppressive burdens," which is the way it should be and is appropriate to the heart which is the great one and the paramount essence within each and every one of us throughout the world. But instead of being like that, the heart always has to accept and experience the results of one's actions and put up with the suffering. This is true even though one may have so much wealth that one can hardly find room to store it; wealth which one has sought for the purpose of ensuring one's physical and mental happiness. But there is no way for it to act as a balm to bring some happiness, in the way one thinks it should, without any suffering, discontent and trouble. So in the end one never sees any hope of getting any freedom from it.

The practices which the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* strive to develop in various ways are all for the sake of freedom and salvation, and these prac-

tices are such as we have depicted in this book. Apart from the purpose of overcoming the evil *kilesas* which makes it necessary for them to put up with suffering, hardship and a strict discipline, inherent in these practices, it is hard to see any other reason why they should do all this.

What I have known and described here in this book, are just those methods which are used by those Bhikkhus who hope to slip quietly out of the snares of *Māra* which we have been discussing. They keep trying to force themselves onward with whatever mindfulness, strength and ability each one of them has, by using their own individual methods of making progress, as we have already seen, and each of them tends to stress that method of development which suits him most.

The Way to Fight Against Pain & the Kilesas

We have not yet come to the end of the story of those Bhikkhus who liked to sit in *samādhi* for long periods of time — for many hours so as to get to know the nature of the painful feelings which arise in the body and heart quite clearly. But I got side-tracked and involved in the topic of the *kilesa* of greed, so I delved into it and dealt with it enough to allay my characteristic tendency to become excessively profuse. So now I shall return to the story of these Bhikkhus, and I hope that you will forgive me for this habit of going on and on beyond what is reasonable.

It is well known amongst those who practise the way that many of the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* prefer to train and discipline themselves by sitting for long periods of time. This is much the same as with other methods such as eating little food or fasting.

They say that they sit for long periods, not with the purpose of fighting against the painful feelings that arise in the manner of dull and obstinate slogging which is lacking in thought and wisdom, but by using their heads to think and fight — in other words, by using their faculties of mindfulness, wisdom and the rest. They use their heads to think with wisdom so as to know the nature of all forms of feeling quite clearly, for they are a fundamental Dhamma Truth *(Sacca–Dhamma)* which is to be found in the body and *citta*.

They say that the method of resolving the nature of painful feeling by constantly changing one's posture, is upon examination, shown to be nothing

but one's own fear of pain, and not contending with it so as to get to know pain. Because the changes of posture conceal the painful feelings, so that one cannot see them clearly enough to be able to have complete confidence in oneself when painful feeling arises at a time of dire necessity.

In experiencing the truth in the *Sacca–Dhamma* such as the truth of *dukkha,* and doing so by confronting it while sitting in *bhāvanā* one can experience it in a way that reaches causes and results, and reaches the heart *(citta).* This brings certainty and complete confidence in oneself both in the present and for the future, that one will never be afraid or overwhelmed by painful feeling again however strong it may be. This includes the final period before one dies when it is instinctive to feel afraid. But now one will have no fear because the fear of death and the fear of *dukkha* arise from the same hidden place and are the same thing. They are a contradiction of the truth which comes from investigating in a manner which is not thorough and does not take all sides of the problem into account based on the principles of truth.

But when one investigates thoroughly on all sides until one sees the truth in *dukkha* and the truth in what we call "birth" and "death" until one is fully satisfied, there remains no reason why one should be afraid any more. Because the nature of the four elements — which are earth, water, air and fire, all gather together within the body, as well as the nature of the heart — each retain their fundamental natures as elements and do not die. They just change their interrelationships all the time in accordance with the causes and conditions which effect them. In other words, when the four elements have broken apart and departed from their association together in the body, they just revert to their original elementary natures, but they are not annihilated.

As for the heart, it remains the heart as it always has been, even though it dwells in dependence on human or animal bodies of various kinds within those three realms of existence. But also, there are those who do not dwell in any bodily form, such as the hearts of the Lord Buddha, of the Pacceka Buddhas and all the other "Victorious Ones" *(Jīṇāsava)* all of whose hearts are completely pure. Therefore one should not be afraid when one searches for the way it all works and fits together and can find no reason or basis for it, for this can only create a lot of fanciful and doleful ideas, all of which are caused by such thoughts.

For those searching thoughts are the cause of one's experience of the Dhamma Truths while one is sitting, investigating and fighting against the

pain by using mindfulness and wisdom. And this brings the experience of tangible results to one very quickly — in fact much more quickly than one would normally expect. This experience then becomes deeply buried in the heart and always remain firmly fixed there within oneself. Even though after this one may not always be able to investigate and see the truth as one did the first time, that which one has once experienced will never revert and change and alter and become something else, for it must always be the truth within one's heart.

After that there is nothing left but to develop it and become skilled and far seeing in the truth, going deeper and more subtle all the time. Until one understands all aspects of it and can let go of all one's attachments entirely. Therefore the investigation of painful feeling which arises when one sits for a long time, or at other times such as when one is sick and in pain, is a way to experience and reveal the truth of Dhamma fully — and this method is no problem for those Bhikkhus who are warriors and fight using true mindfulness and wisdom.

On the other hand, no kinds of painful feelings are likely to be of any value to those who are weak and complaining and wanting all painful feelings to disappear without doing any investigation to find some way out. Painful feeling will continue to be a danger to such people and its danger will steadily increase the more they think in ways which oppose the truth. This is why, even though all people and animals everywhere have painful feelings, hardly anyone seems to be able to think of a way to gain some value from them. In fact, it is generally true that people are more likely to grasp hold of that painful feeling — a thing which they should not want — and to burn themselves with it by means of thoughts which oppose Dhamma. Rather than by investigating and examining it so as to remove *dukkha* and the cause of *dukkha (Samudaya)* from their bodies and minds, to whatever extent they should be able to do this in accordance with their level and ability — as it is taught in Buddhism.

The *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* have knowledge and experience which is very different from that of the average person. Such as the ways of practice which we have delineated, including their stories and the things which branched off from them in accordance with the way that each of these Bhikkhus progressed. These are the things which we should think about. But it would not be right to assume that the way they practised was contrary to the regular way or path, because the principles of the practices which they

did were entirely in conformity with the principles of truth, which are the truths of Dhamma *(Sacca–Dhamma)*, and there is no way in which one can find fault with them. To say that they are conceited and that they practise so as to show off to others is certainly not true, because they never have any intention of becoming associated with external things in the world. Instead, their intention is just that of training and disciplining themselves alone. Even the results which they get from doing these practices are fully in conformity with the aim of Dhamma — which is to know the Dhamma Truths, that are the chief and fundamental principles of Buddhism.

Venerable Ajaan Mun, who is the teacher to this line of *Kammaṭṭhāna,* also followed this same path, and he trained and taught his followers to do so in the same way as he had done it. By for example, teaching them to be fighters so as to know the various painful feelings which arise within them. But I feel that I have not enough ability to describe properly and assess many aspects of Venerable Ajaan's way of practice. It is just that I think about it and how, if I had had enough courage and ability to oppose the *kilesas* and withstand the *dukkha* in my *khandhas* and *citta* as Venerable Ajaan had, I should by now have gone free from *dukkha* and attained something. I would then probably not be so clumsy and so poor in my ability to think and to be quick and nimble in wisdom as is presently the case, which is so vexatious to myself. In speaking or writing about others, when I know their story well enough I can probably do so reasonably well. But the important thing is my own lack of wisdom and ability so that I cannot find any way to express myself when speaking or writing so that others may understand. Therefore the writer can only write about the story of other Bhikkhus so that you who read this may gain some value from it, for each of us have our own characteristic good tendencies deeply hidden within us which are quite individual in their modes and directions, so that the Lord taught that we should not be thoughtless about each other. All of you who read this, both men and women probably have many good characteristic tendencies and much meritorious endowment. Some may even have much more than the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* whose stories are told herein, as well as myself, in fact some may have such tendencies and merits as are incomparably greater — but none of us can know or see whether this is so or not. Like the work of writing this book which puts us in mind of the ways of a millionaire, loaded with wealth who is never likely to go anywhere without his servants. He is bound to keep in touch with them and to use them to do

all sorts of business even though he is a millionaire. So I keep thinking how I can get a story from this person and another from that person and then I go and get them to tell me their stories so that I can turn whatever is suitable in them, to good use — in the same way as the millionaire puts his servants in his house to good use.

You who read this and reckon that you should get value from those methods which the Bhikkhus put into practice to fight against their *kilesas,* ought to get some value from them. Because the *kilesas* in all their various forms which are there in the Bhikkhus are not likely to be any different from those which are there in men and women everywhere. We should therefore be able to think of a way to correct and cure those *kilesas,* which are daring, wild and reckless, always wanting to disagree with this and to fight that, so that we may dwell in a state of sufficiency and contentment and that our behaviour may be more seemly and peaceful. The *kilesas* will then no longer be stubborn and hard to placate as they used to be. For generally speaking one tends to give way to the *kilesas* and go along with them almost every time until they gain heart and change into *kilesas* which "must" have their own way. Then they lead one into all sorts of contrary behaviour without considering what one's loss will be as a result of it — and what loss one's family will also suffer, as well as the various aspects of one's work and business for which one is responsible. For they can lead to all these things going wrong until they are ruined, with no way left to recover and put them right.

But opposing the *kilesas* by going the right way of Dhamma, even if only a little will never do any harm. In fact it will continue to bring value to us, steadily, until it becomes of enormous value to ourselves to our home and to our country. This is in stark contrast to the *kilesas* which go against us and which we give way to and willingly go along with. The more we give way to them when they oppose us, the more we make ourselves subservient to them. If we are easy and let them go against us in a big way, and we always give way to them, the time will come when we are strongly under their influence, until finally we become people without any value and with nothing left in us that is essential or important, without even realising it. By the time we do come to realise the situation it will have already gone too far for any hope of recovery. It is a most sorry and deplorable thing that people who are complete

in all their faculties should willingly give way and lay themselves down like a drawbridge, allowing the various kinds of *kilesas* to crawl all over their heads and to trample over them going back and forth, as if they were the carcass of a dead animal.

I sometimes think about the *kilesas* and how they serve their own ends and take advantage of us in that way. It makes me angry, while also forgetting that anger is one of the *kilesas* which are crawling over our heads and trampling us down. But such thoughts of anger in the direction of getting free, gaining the upper hand and defeating the *kilesas,* which have had us in their power for a long time, do not seem to be the type of *kilesas* which bring people to loss or ruin. If anger directed towards the *kilesas* for the purpose of having revenge on one's own *kilesas* were to turn into something which increased the *kilesas,* causing them to grow greater and stronger, it is hard to see how any of those who have in fact gained freedom from *dukkha* could have done it, because they would have been dull and unresponsive people who never get exasperated enough to fight against the *kilesas.* For, the instinct of fighting is widespread, so that both people and animals have tendencies of pride and anger to uphold their position, which come from their past. Thus they have strength of heart to keep working at whatever they do until they can finish it. Even in sports, they have pride and anger to spur them on until the contest is finished. But who wins or loses should not be important because each one is concerned with his performance.

Some of the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* tell us how the animosity between the *kilesas* and themselves seem to be no different from the way that people fight together in a war. The determination, resentment and anger which were there, were quite obvious while fighting the most significant *kilesas* at a crucial time with neither side ready to give way in the least. One of them said how the *kilesas* were clever in the way that they liked to get the upper hand while he was off guard. He also said "How he himself was clever" in the way he liked being off guard, so allowing the *kilesas* to be there all the time! For even though he had set himself to be watchful and guarded, he would forget, which allowed the *kilesas* to prevail. But the time came when he felt in himself that because he had been off guard and unmindful, he had let the *kilesas* swallow practically all that was valuable in him, then determination arose and anger arose. The effort that he had been making to practise the way then got help and support from determination and anger. So it became very strong, to the point where

he took no thought of whether he would live or die, or whether it was pleasant or painful, but only of attacking and fighting against the *kilesas* to the utmost of his mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort. This *Ācariya* said:

> "On each occasion, by the time I managed to defeat the *kilesas* I almost had to die first, when they would be the ones to cremate me — which in fact sometimes happened — because of the determined effort and hope of defeating the *kilesas* each time."
>
> "For myself, if I had not had the determination and anger to help me I am sure that I would never have done much good. Especially in the fight with the *kilesas* of obscene tendencies within myself. I could never do it in a playful way like someone who has no heart for it. Even if I walked *caṅkama* practically all night I would never see any results from it such as I would remember in the future. But when I acted like a warrior, full of either determination or anger to support me, the effort that arose stood out so clearly that I will never forget it. Though the experience does not go on lasting for long and I had to rely on this method to help me every time. For as soon as these two Dhammas were not present for a short while the *kilesas* at once started to move in. So I had to keep hold of these Dhammas close to me all the time until the war between myself and the *kilesas* reached a decisive conclusion with myself as the absolute winner. Only then could I relax and ease off."

As I have a tendency to be very outspoken, I asked him:

> "Have you reached a decisive conclusion yet? And if so, who is the absolute winner?"

He smiled and answered:

> "I can talk about fighting all the *kilesas* using various methods, but as to that victory I must wait to hear about it, that's all. For I feel quite certain that having done the work, the results of what one has done from the small beginnings right through to the greatest and most decisive actions must steadily become apparent. I have faith in the Lord Buddha and I do not believe that he ever taught with duplicity or deceit. Whatever he taught is bound to be true for all time, so I believe that the things I have done must come

back to me as results for sure. From the most gross to the most subtle, my actions are bound to come back for me to experience the results one day — if I have not already experienced them."

"And now, have you already experienced some of the results?"

But he just smiled and gave no answer.

What we have understood so far should be enough for us to grasp the underlying essential principle that, when obstinate determination, and anger are set against the *kilesas* within oneself, leading one to cure the *kilesas* or to take revenge on them in various ways by using the methods of the Path *(Magga)* — which are mindfulness and wisdom — then these two factors (obstinacy and anger) should be considered as Dhamma — the way of the Path which goes in the direction of curing both obstinacy and anger — in which case they are not *kilesas.* This is like using a thorn to extract a thorn. For generally when one gets a thorn stuck in one's foot it hurts, but when uses another thorn to pull the first one out it becomes a valuable ally. In a similar way, if obstinate determination and anger are put to use in the wrong way they are *kilesas* and bring one harm in accordance with how strong and persistent they are. But when they are used in the right way they become Dhamma and they are allies whose value also accords with their strength and persistence. This is the way that some *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* use them all the time as a Dhamma remedy to aid their efforts to cure the various kinds of *kilesas.*

I, who am writing this, am in full agreement with the foregoing methods — in fact they can be seen in the methods of training and discipline which the Lord Buddha used, by the way that he gave up everything in order to defeat all the *kilesas*, and for this he was even prepared to give up his life without any regrets. In addition, the *Sāvakas* who followed the Lord, also used those methods of practice which were given to them for training and disciplining themselves in various ways. All of these methods were bound to involve strong and stubborn determination to oppose those obstacles of many kinds which are the work of various *kilesas* that suggest and intimidate, and which in one way or another they may have become attached to and couldn't get free from. But they kept on trying to oppose them, until they succeeded by

means of stubborn determination — which at times may have been mixed with anger directed towards themselves or their *kilesas* which penetrated into the field of their striving. This is what helped and supported them and made their striving firm and resolute in their aim of gaining fulfilment of heart, and this has been the case with teachers and *Ācariyas* throughout, right from those times up to the present, including all those who practise the way and who are interested in Dhamma. All of them must have put these two factors into use, for without them they would have got no results — because they are Dhammas which greatly increase their strength of heart.

One's training and discipline, which uses various techniques and methods which are seen to be necessary for getting rid of all the *kilesas* and evil *dhammas,* must have the above mentioned two Dhammas to support and aid it every time. This is necessary in order that the heart shall have a firm resolve and can stand up to those things which are its internal enemies to the absolute maximum of its capacity, without becoming weak and disheartened nor drawing back at those times when one gets into a critical situation — which is likely to happen at any time to those who strive for Dhamma. It is like walking in thick dense jungle, one is bound to come across incidents and obstacles which are on one's path all the time. Until one has managed to pass free, beyond all of them. Those who practise for the eradication of the *kilesas* within their hearts are in the same kind of situation as this person walking through a thick jungle, full of *kilesas* of all types — some frightening, some obdurate, some overpowering, some lovely, some detestable or repulsive, some of which make one angry, make one cry, or laugh, make one fed up and tired, or make one feel satisfied and happy — on and on until describing them becomes endless. As the Lord said there are countless *kilesas* and cravings hanging about, ready to block the path of practice and there is no time when those who go this way can relax and take it easy for a while. All these *kilesas,* which we have rather incompletely described, are to be found in all classes of beings in the world and one cannot find any who do not have these tangled and distorted things as part and parcel of themselves.

Anyone who would go this way must use mindfulness, wisdom, faith, and effort as the means of opening up the way, enough so that he can go along the path steadily, with such things as stubborn determination to help him along. This is like the gearbox of a car which can give increased force to drive it through muddy stretches of road until it goes free and beyond them.

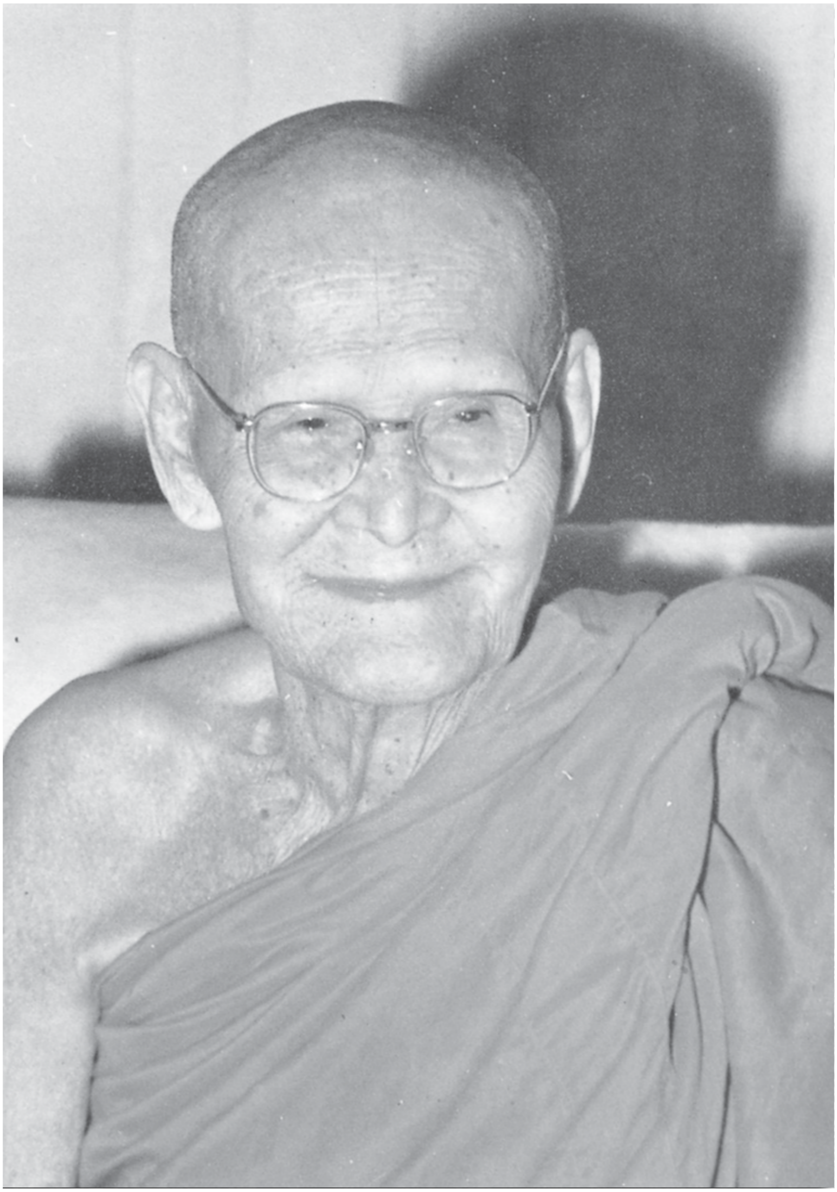
In regard to this "stubborn determination", whether in the world or in Dhamma, those who are anxious to live in safety and security may have to bring it up and use it in some situations in order to gain the results which they intend if they do not want to be driven into a corner due to the suffering and troubles of various kinds which can arise from being in need and at their wits end — or due to some kinds of *kilesas* overshadowing the heart. And the more they have made a commitment to reach a high goal, the more must they put their whole effort into the struggle, without any thought of whether they will live or die. Their only aim is to bring to completion that which they have set their hearts on. Like those *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* which we have already discussed, who trained and disciplined themselves in various ways. All of them had the fundamental aim of reaching the great treasure — which is the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* the goal, victorious and free from *Dukkha* and all concerns or anxieties both great and small. This is why they are prepared to risk their lives and face death and suffering without having any regrets — like the Bhikkhu who walked towards the place where he heard a tiger growling and roaring in a fearful way. If it had been one of us we would probably have died even before the tiger could have reached us — yet those Bhikkhus who are ready to face death for the sake of the Supreme Dhamma can make themselves walk towards the tiger in a way which deserves our admiration. For out of hundreds of people it would be hard to find one who can do this if we think of ourselves in that same situation. This is why they should be praised and admired and held up as a true example of those who are warriors and sons of the victorious Buddha *(Sākyaputta Buddhajinorasa)* who are fully prepared to die in the battle in conformity with their declaration that they take the Buddha as their refuge from the day when they were first ordained.

Few are prepared to give their lives as an offering to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the *Sangha* with complete commitment. Such people and Bhikkhus are a rarity — which conforms with the Dhamma as being a form of nature that rarely arises — and this has always been the case. Those who do cultivate Dhamma in order to make it grow within their own character in such a way that it is clearly evident to them will probably be quite prepared to sacrifice everything to it — even their own lives. Like those Bhikkhus who walk about the hills at night when there is no moonlight; those who walk *caṅkama,* in competition with the tigers roaring in their vicinity in the middle of the night; those who sit and practise *samādhi bhāvanā* at the edge

of deep, precipitous cliffs; those who go and sit in meditation in the middle of the night right next to the path where tigers walk back and forth to the cave where they live; those who go and sit in meditation on a rocky outcrop in the hills in the middle of the night; those who walk *caṅkama* even while a big tiger comes and sits down close by and watches them; those who practise meditation under their mosquito net while a tiger creeps up quietly to look at them, until it reaches the mosquito net; those who sit in meditation practice from dusk until dawn; those who fast and do meditation practice for many days without eating; those who walk *caṅkama* from dusk to dawn; those who strive to develop their meditation by the three postures of standing walking and sitting but not lying down for many nights; in fact all the various forms of striving for development which the Bhikkhus practise with determination and ascetic resolve, without being afraid of suffering and death.

If they did not have a stubborn determination of the do-or-die type how could they ever put up with the suffering and torment? In fact they would surely be a dismal failure. But because their effort is of the stubbornly determined kind, ready to do-or-die, these Bhikkhus do not get more suffering and "go broke". The *kilesas* are the ones that are broken and their corpses vanish from the heart leaving none behind. The heart then changes and becomes completely pure, beyond and above those things which had previously been oppressing it.

Thus, both stubborn determination and anger, when turned against one's own *kilesas* give one a firm basis and strength, and they help one to finish this work without hindrance. So the wisest of men all praise whose who triumph over themselves, saying that this is supreme, and far better than being triumphant over other people or things of any kind. As the Dhamma saying goes: *"Attā have jitaṁ seyyo" — "To purify oneself is the most excellent thing."* Therefore, stubborn determination and anger directed against one's own *kilesas* is the first stage for someone who would reach the level of those who have triumphed over themselves with complete fulfilment.



Venerable Ajaan Khao

12

A Short Biography of Venerable Ajaan Khao

While writing about stubborn determination and anger, at some length, we thought how it would be good to relate the story of one *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who was a follower of Venerable Ajaan Mun in the middle period of his teaching. For this is a story that illustrates the Dhamma teaching about stubborn determination and anger when directed against one's own *kilesas.* This Bhikkhu was Venerable Ajaan Khao, and he was strongly imbued with both of these factors in his practice of Dhamma and still has them up to the present time. But we should explain to the reader that this Bhikkhu is someone of significance at present, and he is also still alive.[89] If we were to mention his name, practically everyone would know it throughout Thailand. But his name will not be revealed for the reason already given, and because it is generally the practice of *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* not to want their names mentioned in such circumstances.

Venerable Ajaan Khao had a very resolute character and liked to put his whole strength into whatever he did. He has been like this since he was a lay person and when he was ordained he carried these characteristics over with him, and the longer he was ordained in Buddhism, which is a true religion and teaches people to act truly in whatever they do, the more he felt impressed by the principles of Dhamma. It seems that before he was ordained he had a wife and family, but he became disillusioned and weary with the round of *saṁsāra* and resolved to train himself so as to attain *Nibbāna* in this life, unless he died in the meantime.[90] Therefore as soon as he was ordained he went

89. At the time this book was written Venerable Ajaan Khao was alive. He has since died and there is no longer any need to protect his identity in this translation. So I have altered the notation of "This *Ācariya*" to "Venerable Ajaan Khao." (The Translator)

90. The full story of Venerable Ajaan Khao is given in his biography which has been translated into English. It will be printed for the first time in 2006.

searching for an *Ācariya* who was fully conversant with the ways of inward meditation *(citta–bhāvanā).*

Before he went the way of the practice of *Kammaṭṭhāna,* it seems that he had many things which disturbed him and acted as a discouragement and an obstacle, things which came from practically everybody he met, both from lay people and Bhikkhus. All of them said that nowadays it was beyond all possibility to attain the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* and that it was long past the era when this could be done. That however rightly and properly one were to practise the way of the Dhamma and *Vinaya* one would not be able to attain the result of reaching the goal as one may hope to. That the practice of meditation makes people mad and whoever wants to go mad should go out and practise it. That if one wants to be a good person like we villagers, one should not drive oneself mad by going the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna.* That in this age there are no *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* apart from those who sold magic *yantras, mantras,* methods of magic, lockets which have magic properties, magic potions for influencing others, ways of making people impervious to bullets and knives, knowledge of auspicious times and astrology. But that as far as finding *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who actually practise the way of *Dhutanga,* there were none left nowadays. That he must therefore not waste his time and tire himself to no purpose, for to get to a state of ease and happiness in that way was impossible.

These were some of the many obstacles which blocked the path of those who wanted to practise the way of the *Dhutangas* in those days. But Venerable Ajaan Khao was not prepared to listen to any of them, although he did not object or argue with them for it would not have been useful to either side. But deep within himself he considered that:

> "These people and these *Ācariyas* are not the owners of the Buddhist religion, they are not the owners of the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* nor have they any power to make anyone go mad, such that I could believe what they say. I have faith only in the Lord Buddha, in the Dhamma and in the *Sangha* of *Sāvaka Arahants* as being truly worthy within the Triple World. Those who spoke, trying to persuade me and to stop me, so that I would not go the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* and practise its various methods are not amongst those who are truly worthy at all. Just by looking at their behaviour and manners, which they display, one can know whether they are truly wise or fools and

generally what their characteristics are like. Therefore, their objections and their wanting to stop me are things which would be a waste of time for me even to consider. So now I must go away to practise the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* as soon as I can without considering anything else, and I must search for true things, which accord with the basic principles of Dhamma which have been handed down to us. This I must do until I reach the absolute limit of my strength and ability, and if this *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu,* which in this case is myself, should chance to die, then I willingly give my life and entrust myself to the supreme Dhamma."

When he was ready to set out on his *"Dhutanga"* wanderings, there were at the same time many lay people and all the other Bhikkhus gathered together in the monastery, and just before he went he spoke in truth from his heart to those who had tried to stop him so as to leave no doubt as to his intentions, saying:

"When I have gone from here, unless I can teach myself to attain the ultimate level of *citta* and Dhamma I shall not return to show my face amongst you again. I am ready to die for the sake of knowing and seeing into Dhamma with clarity and insight but not for anything else. Please remember this that I have said, just in case I have the right characteristics to enable me to return and meet you again and you will not have forgotten. So the only likelihood of my meeting you again will be in such circumstances, as I have already said."

He said this at a time when there were many people, both highly respected *Ācariyas* and lay people from his village who had faith in them as being very wise and learned, all of them trying to stop him going away. He said:

"At that time my heart seemed so strong it could crush a diamond into powder in an instant, and it seemed as if I could leap into the sky and walk about up there for all of them to see. This was probably due to pride and high spirits in my heart — as if it was shining out brightly for all those people to see and telling them: 'See here, the diamond radiance in this heart, can't you see it? Are you all stupid enough to disparage me, saying that I will go mad by delving into strange things? My heart is not in the same sphere as all of yours, such that you can gather it up into your clan to

> die worthlessly in the way a dog dies. I am not prepared to die in the way that all of you would lead me to go towards death right now, for I intend to die in the way that the Lord Buddha taught us, by not leaving any 'seed' of becoming remaining whatsoever. I have already died in your way countless times so that it is impossible to tell in how many cemeteries I have ended my days. But although I may not be able to know this with my own higher knowing faculty *(ñāṇa),* I have faith in the Lord Buddha and his teaching, for his higher knowing faculty was supreme and unequalled'."

As soon as he was ready he said farewell and took his leave of all the *Ācariyas* and learned people and walked away through a large crowd of lay followers. He then set out for That Phanom[91] on foot through forest and thick jungle, following paths worn by people and buffalo carts, for in those days there were no roads, not even the roughest dirt roads, but only a foot path. There were also many wild animals of all sorts in large numbers throughout the forest with plenty of elephants and tigers everywhere, because there were no villages and not many people about as there are nowadays, with people and villages everywhere. The forest was also the original true forest and there was real danger that if one lost one's way one would have no food and may die in the forest, for often one could walk all day without meeting anyone or seeing any sign of habitation.

Venerable Ajaan Khao walked through the forests and jungles until he reached That Phanom and from there he walked on to Udon Thani and thence up to Nong Khai, searching for Venerable Ajaan Mun whom he learnt was spending the *vassa* (rains period) in the district of Tha Bo.

> "I was only able to spend a short time training with him before he went away from us to Chiang Mai and disappeared into silence," he said. "Then I felt a sense of hopelessness for a while because I had no teacher to teach and lead me. But when I heard that Venerable Ajaan Mun had gone to stay and practise the way in the Chiang Mai district I set out to follow him by wandering in the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna* way, going along the bank of the Mekong river until I reached the province of Chiang Mai. Then I wandered about in the various districts of Chiang Mai with peace and happiness."

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91. This is a well known *Chetiya* in Nakhon Phanom province.

The places where Venerable Ajaan Khao stayed and practised were deep in the forests and hills and far away from any villages. At the same time Venerable Ajaan Mun was also wandering about in that area, but it was not easy to find him because he always liked to take off on his own away from his colleagues and he would not readily let anyone meet him. However, Ajaan Khao went on following him relentlessly, until finally he managed to meet him and to receive genuine instruction and training. But Venerable Ajaan Mun would not let anybody stay with him for he liked to live alone.

Venerable Ajaan Khao said that he always tried to stay close by Venerable Ajaan Mun so that he could go and see him and learn from him when it was necessary. Whenever he went to him to discuss and learn about any aspect of Dhamma Venerable Ajaan Mun had *mettā* for him and taught him to the utmost of his ability without holding or hiding anything — but he would never let anybody stay with him. However, Ajaan Khao said that he was quite content that Venerable Ajaan had *mettā* for him and taught him at those times when it was necessary for him to go and ask questions of him. Then once he had cleared up his problems, he paid his respects and left to go and practise what he had learnt on his own — he was thus going back and forth quite often. When he had stayed there for a long time, for some years, Venerable Ajaan Mun very kindly let him stay for the *Vassa* period with him. Ajaan Khao was so glad and so happy when Venerable Ajaan Mun told him that he felt as if he could float in the air, for after trying for so many years he had at last succeeded. From then on he stayed regularly with Venerable Ajaan during the *vassa*.

The practice and development of his *citta bhāvanā* (meditation) seems to have gained strength steadily after he went to stay in the Chiang Mai district, and with a skilled teacher to guide and teach him continually, his heart seemed as if it was about to leap up into the sky so strong was his happiness and contentment in the Dhamma that arose in his heart. No longer was there any unhappiness, lack of good cheer or sadness due to instability of heart, sometimes up and sometimes down, as happened when he was staying in other places. From day to day his heart steadily progressed both in *samādhi* and in wisdom and he became engrossed in striving day and night without ever becoming satiated.

A Large Elephant Pays Him a Visit

At one time Venerable Ajaan Khao was spending the *vassa* period in the same place with another Bhikkhu. Late one night it was very quiet and he was sitting in meditation in a small hut. At the same time there was a large elephant whose owner let it loose to wander in the forest and find its own food in that area. He did not know where it had come from but it slowly walked closer towards the back of his hut. Right behind his hut there was a large boulder blocking the way, so the elephant could not get close up to him. When it got to the boulder it stretched out its trunk into the hut until it touched his klod[92] and the mosquito net above his head while he was sitting in meditation. The sound of its breathing while it was sniffing him was loud and he felt it cool on his head while his klod and mosquito net swung back and forth. Meanwhile the Ajaan sat repeating the *parikamma* "Buddho", putting everything he had got into it and entrusting his heart and life to the genuine "Buddho", not having anything else to rely upon. The large elephant then stood there quietly for about two hours as if it were waiting to catch him when he moved, ready to tear him to pieces. Once in a while he heard its breath sniffing him from outside the mosquito net. When it finally moved, it drew back and walked to the western end of his hut and reached into a basket of sour tamarinds at the side of a tree which lay people had brought him to clean the lid of his bowl and started to eat them making a loud noise crunching them up like they were delicious. Ajaan Khao thought:

> "Those tamarinds for cleaning my bowl lid are going to be cleaned out and there will be none left for sure. If the owner of this big belly comes to the end of them and cannot find any more, it is sure to come into my hut and find me and tear me to bits. So I had better go out and speak to it and tell it some things that it should know, because this animal knows the language of people quite well since it has lived with people for a long time. When I go out to speak to it, it will be more likely to listen to what I say than to be stubborn and difficult. If it is stubborn and belligerent it will probably kill me, but even if I don't go out and talk to it, once it has eaten all the tamarinds it is bound to come this way and find me. If it is going to kill me there is also no escape because it is late at night and it is too dark for me to see where I am going."

92. See footnote number 18 on page 15.

Having come to this decision he left his small hut and stood hiding behind a tree in front of it and started to speak to the elephant saying:

> "Big brother, your small brother would like to say a few words to you, please listen to what I have to say to you now."

As soon as the elephant heard the sound of his voice it went completely still and quiet without making a move. Then Ajaan Khao spoke to it in a mild, persuasive manner, saying:

> "Big brother, you have been brought up by people who have looked after you at their homes until now you have become fully domesticated. You are thus fully aware of the ways of people, including their language which they talk to each other and which they have used to teach you for many years. You know all these things very well, in fact even better than some people know them. Therefore you, big brother, should know the customs and laws of people and you should not just do anything that you feel like doing as it suits your fancy. Because in doing some things, even though they suit your own inclinations, if they are also contrary to the ways of people and you upset people, they may harm you, or depending on what you do, they may even kill you. For people are far more intelligent than all other animals in the world and all of them fear people more than any other animal. You big brother are also in subjection to people, so you should pay respect to people who are more clever than yourself. If you are even a little bit stubborn or difficult they beat you on the head with a hook which is painful, and if you are very bad they will probably kill you."
>
> "Please don't forget what your little brother has taught you with sympathy for you — and now I will give you the five *sīla*, for your little brother is a Bhikkhu. You should keep them well, then when you die you will go to a state of happiness, and at least you should be born as a human being with merit and the virtue of Dhamma in your heart. But if you are born higher than that you may go to the heaven realms or *Brahmaloka* or higher still, all of which are far superior to being born as an animal like an elephant or a horse which people use to draw carts or to drag logs about while being beaten with whips, all of which is nothing but torment and trouble throughout one's life until one dies without having any chance to get free from this burden, which is such as you have to put up with at present."

"Big brother, please listen carefully and make a true resolve to accept the moral precepts. They are firstly, *"Pāṇātipāta"* — you must not kill people or animals deliberately by using your strength and ability to do so — and also, you must not maltreat or oppress others, whether people or animals. For to do these things is evil. Secondly, *"Adinnādāna"* — you must not steal or take things for yourself which belong to others and which others are keeping in reserve for their own use — such as the tamarinds in that basket which big brother was eating up just now. For they were given by people to me for cleaning the lid of my bowl. But I do not take offence at this, for I don't want you to make any evil *kamma* at all. I just mentioned it to show how it was something which had an owner. If things such as that are not given to you, you should not eat them, nor should you walk over them and trample them down and damage them. Thirdly, *"Kāmesu–miccācāra"* — you must not have sexual intercourse with any animal which has a mate for this would be wrong doing. If you have sexual intercourse, it should be only with one who has no mate, no owner, for this is not wrong doing. Fourthly *"Musāvāda"* — you must not lie or deceive. Let your actions and behaviour be true and straight forward and not deceitful such that they give a wrong impression and fool others, which would be wrong and evil. Fifthly *"Surā–meraya–majja–pamādaṭṭhāna"* — you must not take anything which causes intoxication or drunkenness such as alcoholic liquors. To do so is wrong and evil."

"You must keep these precepts, for if you don't you can fall into hell when you die, and there you will have to put up with great suffering for long periods of time, for aeons, before you reach the end of the *kamma* that led you to hell and you can rise out of it. But even after getting free from hell, there would still be the remainder of your evil *kamma* which would lead you to life after life as a ghost, a demon or an animal, suffering the results of the evil *kamma* you made, before you could be born as a person which is very difficult to attain because of the evil *kamma* which oppresses you and holds you down. Therefore big brother, you must remember well what I have said and practise what I have taught you. Then you will get free from life as an animal and will be born as a human being or a *Devatā* in your next life for sure. That is all I have to teach you and I hope that big brother will be glad to do these things. Now, you may go about to find a place to rest or something to eat as you feel like it. Your younger brother will now go and practise his meditation and he will share some of his virtue with you

> and spread out *mettā* to his big brother so that you will never be lacking in happiness. Now elder brother it is time for you to go elsewhere."

It was most remarkable that for the whole of the time that he was teaching this large elephant it stood absolutely still, as if it were made of rock. It did not fidget or move at all but stood motionless until he had finished speaking. Then as soon as he had given the *sīla* and his blessings and told it to go it began to move its huge body making a noise like an earthquake while it drew back, turned around and went off. It walked away in a deliberate, thoughtful manner, as if it truly understood everything it had heard. Thinking about this incident I cannot help feeling a lot of sympathy for one whose body was that of an animal, but whose heart was that of a human being, able to appreciate the teaching on good and evil which it had received without being obstinate or arrogant, as one would expect with such a large and strong animal. In fact it was very mild mannered and appreciative of the moral teaching throughout — and as soon as Venerable Ajaan told him it was time to go he immediately turned around and went away. While listening to his teaching it also listened attentively until it almost stopped breathing, just like those who listen to a Dhamma talk given to Bhikkhus — with full respect for Dhamma. For these two reasons it makes one think and fills one with wonder, for it is not only that the elephant was an animal and was interested in listening, for if any people had been there listening they would have been enraptured and carried away by the talk of Venerable Ajaan Khao. For he used the most sweet and honied language with such skill that it would be rare to find anyone else who could do this, and equally rare to listen to it. So the elephant listened with rapt attention, not fidgeting or even moving its ears until he had finished giving his Dhamma talk and told it to go when it obeyed and went to find something to eat in the manner of a rare and noble animal. It makes one reflect even more deeply how, whether human or animal, if something is experienced which brings satisfaction, it tends to make their hearing clear and lucid and their sight bright as though the night becomes day. Then the heart is in a state of absorption with "*pīti*" — satisfaction and joyful gladness — in the enchanting words, of the type which are always desirable and of which one can never have enough, because they are things which are greatly valued by the heart.

Venerable Ajaan Khao went on flattering the big elephant for quite a long time, until he was fascinated and mesmerised by the sweet, mild words, the flavour of which were heard deep inside — for example:

> "Big brother, you are very strong, whereas I am small and my strength cannot compare with yours — so I feel afraid of you."

Such flattery is one of the most powerful ways of enchantment, and he talked like this until the great elephant went into a trance while standing there, oblivious of everything else. It would even have been glad to disgorge the sour tamarinds that it had swallowed, to put them back in the basket for its charming little brother, without keeping even the taste of them. For this act was a disgrace to the dignity of an intelligent and noble elephant — a walking store of virtue. Once its belly was full of Venerable Ajaan's teachings it went off to find food and never again came to bother him throughout the rest of the *vassa* period, going to other places to find food — and this was quite remarkable, that the heart of an animal should have so much understanding. After the *vassa,* Venerable Ajaan also went away wandering wherever he felt it would be good to go for the purpose of practising the way of Dhamma ever higher and higher.

His Way of Practice

Venerable Ajaan Khao was an earnest *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who was characteristically resolute and courageous and whatever he did, he did truly. When he was staying in the hills, he got the lay supporters to make up three places for walking *caṅkama.* The first one he used for giving homage *(pūjā)* to the Lord Buddha, the second to the Dhamma and the third to the *Sāvaka Sangha* of the Lord. He would walk *caṅkama* on these three paths at different times of the day according to a fixed schedule which he kept to quite strictly. As soon as he had finished his meal in the morning he would go and walk *caṅkama* on the first path paying homage to the Buddha and he would continue until about mid-day. At two o'clock in the afternoon he would start walking on the path paying homage to the Dhamma and continue until 4 pm when it was time to sweep the grounds and bathe. When he had finished doing all his normal and necessary duties he would start to walk *caṅkama* on the path for paying homage to the *Sangha* and go on until 10 or 11 pm, after which he would rest, sitting in meditation practice for a while and then lie down and sleep. As soon as he woke up he would start doing his *samādhi* meditation practice again until dawn when he walked *caṅkama* until it was time for him to go on *piṇḍapāta.*

Some nights he would sit in meditation practice the whole night without getting up from his seat until dawn. Even normally when he sat in *samādhi* meditation, it seems that his heart was very bright after he had finished. But at those times when he sat all night in meditation the material world disappeared entirely from his awareness, and even his physical body seemed to have gone as well. It was altogether a most remarkable and wonderful thing right from the time that he sat down to examine painful feeling *(dukkha–vedanā)* until it died away and ceased due to his examination of the *citta* taking it deep into a subtle and intimate state of calm. At this point the only thing that was apparent to him was "knowing", just this alone, which brought to him a most subtle and gentle calm and happiness which was quite indescribable. There were no supporting conditions *(ārammaṇa)* present in the *citta* however subtle. This means the same thing as saying that the elements of existence *(loka–dhātu)* disappeared simultaneously with the disappearance of the supporting conditions. This state remained until the *citta* drew up and out of it, after which the supporting conditions which were the usual companions of the *citta* returned gradually, bit by bit. Afterwards he would continue working at his practice in the normal way.

When the *citta* has integrated and gone down into a state of calm, even though it remains in this state for several hours there is no feeling of it being a long time such as it would normally appear to be. This must surely be the state of *"Eka citta, eka dhamma"*[93] just within the heart itself alone without there being anything else to form a duality. When it arises out of this state it is then possible to know that the *citta* integrated into a state of calm and remained there for so long, for so many hours. He said:

> "On whatever night the *citta* went into meditation practice without any difficulty and attained calm easily, even if I sat the whole night through in meditation, it seemed as if I had only been sitting for two or three hours. There was nothing to oppress or obstruct it."

Venerable Ajaan Khao tended to encounter dangerous situations in connection with elephants more than anything else. He said:

> "Soon after the previous encounter I again met another large elephant in the Mae Pang district of Lampang Province, and this time I was almost un-

93. The one *citta* which is the same as the one Dhamma in which all duality has dropped away.

able to save myself. This one was a true wild, forest elephant and not one that had lived with and been looked after by people like the previous one."

It was at night and Ajaan Khao was walking *caṅkama* when he heard the sound of it going through the jungle making a lot of noise breaking branches and crashing about. It was coming towards him and getting closer every minute and there was no time for him to run away from it. Then he thought how, normally forest elephants are afraid of fire, so he quickly left the *caṅkama* path and went to get all the remaining candles that he had from the place where he was staying and stuck them into the ground all along by the side of his *caṅkama* path and lit them as fast as he could. To any person who saw it this would be a beautiful, peaceful sight, but it is hardly possible to say how an elephant would react to it. Then as soon as he had finished setting up the candles the elephant had almost got there, giving him no possible way of escape. All he could do was to set up a "true resolve" *(sacca–adhiṭṭhāna)* that the supernatural power of the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the *Sangha* may come and help him and protect him, a servant of the Lord Buddha, against this huge elephant. By that time the elephant had got there and it stopped about two meters away from him at one side of his *caṅkama* path and stood there without a move, its two ears spread out. It was clearly visible in the candle light and he said that its huge body was as large as a hill.

Meanwhile, Ajaan Khao started walking *caṅkama* going back and forth as if he was not concerned about the elephant at all — although in fact he was very afraid of it, so that he could hardly breathe. When he first saw it walking towards him, so strong and aggressive, all that he could think of was to take hold of the "Buddho" symbol and to hold on to it tenaciously, just thinking of this as the one who guarantees life, but apart from this he did not think or see anything. He would not even let his thoughts go out to this giant elephant as large as a hill which had come and was standing by the side of his *caṅkama* path, for he was afraid that his *citta* may slip away from "Buddho" which was his best refuge at that time. "Buddho" and the *citta* then became one and the same thing until the heart lost all fear and there remained just "knowing" and the repetition of "Buddho" which were blended into one. Meanwhile the elephant just stood there like a mountain, looking at him without fidgeting or moving, its ears spread wide as if to indicate that it was not ready to accept any friendly advances. This accorded with the manner in which it walked towards Venerable Ajaan when it first approached him, for it came straight

for him without hesitating, and it acted as if it intended to crush him and kill him — but when it reached him it just stood there like a lifeless dummy.

As soon as the *citta* and "Buddho" went inward and came together, becoming one and the same thing, Ajaan Khao lost all fear. In fact he became positively bold and daring so that he could have walked right up to the elephant without the least feeling of fear. But he thought about it and realised that to walk right up to such a wild jungle animal would be an act of carelessness based on conceit, which one should not do. So he kept on walking *caṅkama* fearlessly with bold courage in competition with the standing elephant, as if there was nothing that could happen that would be any danger to him.

From when it first came, the elephant must have stood there for about an hour, by which time the candles, which were long, and long lasting, were almost finished. Some had already gone out and the rest would not last much longer when the elephant backed away, turned round and walked off by the way it had come. After which it went looking for food in the forest around that area where it could be heard breaking branches and treading on dead wood making a lot of noise.

This was the first time that Venerable Ajaan Khao saw for himself the extraordinary power of the *citta* and of "Buddho". For he was in a critical situation without any way to escape or hide and there was no alternative but to face up to it and use these methods — but even if he had died, he would have had to accept it, for he had no choice. It seems that this experience made him fully confident that whatever happened, if the *citta* and "Buddho", or its equivalent, had become intimately blended together in a natural way, nothing could possibly do any harm to him. He said that he became absolutely convinced of this and has remained so ever since.

It was also very strange how the elephant, instead of becoming wild and violent when it reached him, just stood there, its ears spread wide, apparently quite calm, watching him walking *caṅkama* going back and forth without getting tired of it. Then once it had seen enough it drew back, turned round and went its way searching for food, its manner showing that its stomach had lost all its aggression. One cannot help feeling sympathy for this elephant any less than for the previous one which was a domesticated animal and knew the language of people quite well. But this elephant had been a forest animal since it was born and it must have been over a hundred years old. As it was most unlikely that this one would know the language of people, Venerable Ajaan did not speak to it at all and he just went on walking *caṅkama*. Also,

unlike the first elephant, this one did not have a halter around its neck and the villagers later on told him that it was a wild elephant and had been a leader of the pack for a long time — but why it should have been wandering about on its own at this time nobody could say; maybe it just left the pack for a short time. Even after the elephant had gone, the *Ācariya* went on walking *caṅkama* with wonder in his heart while realising the value of that elephant which had come and helped his *citta* to see the wonderful nature of Dhamma in connection with fear and fearlessness. For this time it enabled him to get to know about it with absolute clarity, leaving no room for any doubt at all. Therefore it would not be wrong to look on this elephant as being like a *Deva* elephant or like one sent by the *Devas.* Because normally, forest elephants are not used to people, nor do they act peacefully towards them, unless they are truly overpowered and cannot attack, when they will quickly flee and try to escape and save themselves. "But this one," Venerable Ajaan said:

> "Came walking straight towards me with its eyes wide open of its own free will without any one compelling it in any way at all, and it came right up close, well within the light of the candles that I had set in place. But it did not come up and squash me or tear me to pieces; nor was it startled and frightened by the fire of the candles, for it did not run away into the forest to save itself from the fire. Instead, after walking up to me in a bold, imposing manner, like it was the 'boss', it just stood there for over an hour, not aggressively, nor afraid, after which it went away in a normal manner. This is what made me think about this animal with amazement so that I have not forgotten it to this day. From that time on, wherever I went wandering and wherever I stayed, I was not afraid, because my heart had full faith in Dhamma from then on. For as it says in the *Dhammapada, 'Dhamma guards those who practise the way',* and it certainly does not discard them, letting them die buried in mud or water like an old log of wood."

Fighting the Kilesas

> "Knowledge of the *citta* and of Dhamma which reaches the heart is most likely to be found at those times when one is in a critical situation. If the situation is not really critical the *citta* tends to play-act as if it is so, causing one to become excited and agitated by endless kinds of *kilesas* which one

could hardly keep up with and cure. In fact one is likely to let them inundate oneself while seeing them in full view right there, as if one was quite unable to restrain them or to follow and cure them so that they may fall away and disappear. But when the situation is truly critical and one is genuinely driven into a corner the *citta* and Dhamma become strong — though where the strength comes from is hard to say. The heart then bows down and submits, accepting oneself and Dhamma with faith and without any resistance. Then if one decides to make it act in any way, or to take hold of any aspect of Dhamma, it accepts and does just that without any opposition. This is probably due to the fear of death, which could in fact take place if it was uncooperative. So the *citta* becomes compliant and "easy to teach", without being stubborn at such a time."

"This is probably the reason why *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* like going into the forests and hills, even though they are afraid of death and one part of the heart does not want to go to such places. My *citta* was like this, but how it is with other people's *cittas* I cannot say — although if they are determined and fully committed to training themselves so as to get to the causes and reach the results of this way in truth, it should be much the same for them as well. Because the *citta* is the dwelling place of both Dhamma and the *kilesas,* which make all people feel full of courage or fear and good or evil respectively, in the same way. Training in accordance with causes, the results of which are the purpose and aim of Dhamma, is therefore able to make all the various kinds of *kilesas* surrender and vanish until they have all gone without leaving any trace or seed that could grow again."

"For myself, I have rather coarse and rough characteristics, so I tend to have confidence in strict discipline and rough methods to enable me to counteract the *kilesas* which are those gross forms of nature which I have within me. Like that time when the large elephant came walking up to me while I was walking *caṅkama.* That was a time when I clearly saw the *kilesas* as well as the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha within my heart. Normally the *citta* which has *kilesas* that dominate and are in charge of the heart is very difficult to discipline and train. Sometimes those who set out to kill and destroy them end up dying before they succeed in doing so because of the mean tenacity at the core of the *āsavas*[94] which have been squatting there

94. *Āsava:* Generally said to be four in number: 1) *Kāmāsava* — sensual desires; 2) *bhavāsava* — the desire for existence; 3) *diṭṭhāsava* — views and opinions; 4) *avijjāsava* — ignorance. *"Āsava"* is usually translated as "cankers" or "corruptions" — although etymology suggests that "outflows" would be the best translation.

within us and feeding on us for long ages. But as soon as I got to the point where there was no escape when that great elephant came to help me, the most stubborn *kilesas* which had been so clever in resisting my efforts all went into hiding, though where they went I don't know. Then it became easy to instruct the heart so that when I ordered it to be like this or that, and when I wanted it to remain fixed to an aspect of Dhamma it immediately agreed and did so. It was as if oil had been put in the machinery so that there was virtually no friction as there had been before."

"As soon as the *kilesas* went away from the heart the Dhamma which had already been developed and was just waiting there arose at the same moment and shone forth brightly — and also, courage and fearlessness towards everything immediately arose within the heart. All this that I had longed for, for so long was there for me to see and admire to my hearts content. Meanwhile the fear of death had gone — where to I don't know, but it enabled me to see quite clearly that fear is a type of *kilesa* which has always appeared quite openly. As soon as the fear which had been oppressing and deceiving my heart disappeared — or even though it may not have entirely disappeared — it made me see quite clearly at that moment how baneful a thing it is. After this, whenever fear should arise, as it may at times, I knew that what I had experienced and seen was enough to act as a reminder for me to know that: 'This fear is not my friend and benefactor, but an enemy who has come in the guise of a friend.' So it could no longer make my heart have confidence in it as it used to and I should endeavour to drive it out every time it arises throughout my life of striving for Dhamma, until the essential nature of this enemy which comes as though it were a friend, is at an end and has entirely disappeared from my heart. Only then can I relax and be happy and free from all kinds of concerns and anxieties."

"It seems to me that if only we can be anxious to take refuge in Dhamma, to have interest in Dhamma, to love and attend closely to Dhamma and practise Dhamma truly in the way that the Lord showed us with complete certainty and true *mettā*, the knowing and seeing of Dhamma at its various levels, which the immediate followers of the Lord Buddha during his lifetime knew and saw, will not be a puzzle that is beyond our capability, which so many suppose it to be. We will then certainly be able to experience Dhamma as a matter of course, in the same way as they knew and saw it at the time of the Lord Buddha."

"The reason why the time, place and people in this present age are so contrary to those at the time of the Lord Buddha, in so far as the ways of the path and fruition are concerned, is because we ourselves act in ways that oppose our own development by wanting results without being interested in causes. These causes are the ways in which we usually behave and practise that may be right or wrong in various aspects. Whereas what we ought to do, is to adjust and alter our actions of body, speech and mind as necessary, to make them conform to Dhamma — which is the way of action leading to the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna*. If we constantly examine and test ourselves against the standard of Dhamma for the purpose of attaining whatever we have set our hearts on, we will at least succeed in attaining that purpose to our satisfaction at whatever level it may be, depending on the strength of each one's mindfulness and wisdom. Because the age when the Lord Buddha taught and this present age, are both ages in which the *kilesas* should be corrected and cured by means of Dhamma — and also dispersed and got rid of by Dhamma. This is like various kinds of disease that have always been prevalent in all ages and which have always been curable by using the right remedy."

"I have had faith in this for a long time and the longer I go on practising, the stronger does it become buried in my heart where nothing can remove it; and the more do I hear the words which Venerable Ajaan Mun used to teach me, which went deep into my heart at the time when I stayed with him. This firm faith went deeper and deeper into my heart until it became one with my heart — like he used to teach us:

'In watching the *kilesas* and searching for Dhamma none of you should overlook the heart which is the place where the *kilesas* and all Dhamma dwells. Both the *kilesas* and Dhamma are to be found only in the heart and not elsewhere in any time or place whatsoever, for they arise in the heart, develop in the heart and die away in the heart — the only one that knows this. Trying to cure the *kilesas* elsewhere and searching for Dhamma in other places is useless, and even if you were to spend the rest of your lives doing so, you would never come across them as they truly are. Even after dying and being reborn many times you would only come across *kilesas* that have arisen from the heart, which means that you would experience the discontent and suffering that comes from them. But if you search for Dhamma in

the heart, the day will come when you start to find it, and this will then increase steadily, depending on the intensity with which you strive for it. But both place and time are also conditions which can promote or suppress the *kilesas* and Dhamma, respectively causing them to develop or deteriorate.'

'Thus, for instance, forms and sounds are conditions which promote the *kilesas* which are already in the heart, causing them to develop and increase. On the other hand, going to practise the way in the hills and forests is for the purpose of promoting the Dhamma which dwells in the heart, causing it to increase greatly.'

'The real *kilesas* and Dhamma are within the heart, whereas the conditions which increase or suppress them are to be found everywhere both internally and externally. This is why the *Ācariyas* teach their followers to avoid and to get away from things which are enticing and disturbing to the heart, things that tend to make those *kilesas* which are already within them become demanding and audacious — such as many things which are experienced through the senses. In addition, they also teach their followers to go wandering and staying in peaceful places where there is solitude so that they can much more easily disperse their various *kilesas* by means of their efforts to practise the way, thus diminishing the round of birth and death *(vaṭṭa)* within their hearts by using these methods.'

'For this reason, to search for a suitable place for the purpose of striving to practise the way, is the most appropriate and right way for one who is ordained and hopes to attain freedom from *Dukkha* in his heart. For this is the right way which follows the basic principles of the Dhamma that the Lord Buddha formulated for his followers after seeing clearly for himself what things were dangers to this purpose. Because staying at times in ordinary places and at other times in unusual and lonely places, the attitude or feeling about the place which is in one's heart, always changes with the place and it is quite inconstant. But when one stays long enough in a place, the *citta* becomes over familiar with that place. Those who are reflective and watchful of themselves will know immediately once this happens and will quickly change and move to another place so as to find the right conditions to prevent themselves relaxing to the point of carelessness. For this would give an opportunity for the *kilesas* to muster their strength so as to bring about one's ruin without one's being aware of what is happening. But when one corrects the situation right away, without being careless or indifferent

to it, the *kilesas* are not likely to have any chance to build themselves up and gain enough strength to ruin the *citta* and the Dhamma which is together with them in this one heart — and one is then able to go on without deteriorating.'

'Those who train themselves to see what is dangerous must be able to have mindfulness *(sati)* continually present to reflect and know, as an adjunct of the heart, without slipping away into forgetful indulgence — and to be able to do this is indeed good. Not slipping away into forgetful indulgence, is a barrier against many kinds of *kilesas* which have not yet arisen and it gives them no opportunity to arise. As for those that are still there, which have not yet been entirely cured, it prevents them from becoming more arrogant, and it also makes one try to get rid of them with unrelenting mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort.'

'Any place where the *citta* is afraid and where it has mindfulness to watch and guard oneself well is a charnel ground for the cremation of all the *kilesas* by means of the ascetic Dhamma[95] — which is the making of effort that has mindfulness and wisdom as the means of burning them up to destruction. Whether by the *jhānas,* by *samādhi,* by *paññā* (wisdom), by *vimutti* (liberation), by the *kilesas* losing their power, by the *kilesas* dying away steadily without having regard to place or time or by the *kilesas* dying away entirely and completely from one's heart, it will happen, and it will be absolutely clear to one's heart in that place where one practises in the right way, and where it is well suited to one who strives with zeal in everything in all ways. There is nowhere else where all the *kilesas* arise and cease, and one must keep it in mind and take it to heart that: *The place where Dhamma thrives, is where the kilesas will deteriorate and die away entirely. What we call 'That place', those who practise the way should always know, is in the 'heart' alone and nowhere else.'*

'Therefore we should struggle to cut the *kilesas* to pieces and destroy them without fear or favour on the battlefield — which is the heart — while depending on a suitable environment as a supporting condition to enable us to be victorious, to gain salvation and to reach the highest point of human attainment by the persistence of our own zeal and striving. We must not go astray and be uncertain of the way, thinking that the *kilesas* and the great mass of our own *dukkha* are to be found anywhere else but within the sphere of the heart alone. In my own practice, from the first beginnings, which

95. *"Tapa Dhamma". Tapa* is thought of as being like a bright fire that burns up the *kilesas.*

were rather haphazard because I had no teacher who was able to teach and train me properly, until I became a teacher myself with my own followers, I have never seen this mass of *dukkha* anywhere but in the heart. Nor have I ever seen any strange and wonderful things surpassing the imagination, the likes of which I had never known or seen before in any place whatsoever except in the heart alone, which is the abode of all Dhamma and all the *kilesas* as well. *But it is dukkha and its cause (Samudaya) in the heart of each one of us, that have such power over everything in the three worlds. For they are able to block the way which leads to the Path, Fruition and Nibbāna completely.* Even when we consider the means, or 'tools' for digging out and clearing away *dukkha* and its cause so that the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* may be clearly revealed, there is nothing in the three worlds which is able to do this better than *'Nirodha'*[96] and *Magga* (the Path), which are within the same heart — just this is the whole story. One must not long for other times, places or people, for this is a hazard and thing which wastes a lot of time and slows one's development without being of any value at all. Thinking like this, rather than thinking about the *kilesas* and Dhamma which are within one's heart contradicts the purpose and aim of the Great Teacher — the Lord Buddha — who bestowed his Dhamma teaching on the world — a teaching which is correct and suitable in all respects at all times.'

"This, in essence, is the teaching which Venerable Ajaan Mun taught in a fully reasoned way while I was living with him in Chiang Mai Province. This I can remember quite clearly for it is buried in my heart and I have no uncertainty, nor have I forgotten any of it right up to the present day."

Sometimes Venerable Ajaan Khao had questions which he asked Venerable Ajaan Mun who answered by admonishing him saying:

"Why do you ask questions like this just as you feel like it without having first considered the principles of Dhamma to see in what direction the truth should be."

One such question he asked was:

"At the time of the Lord Buddha, according to his biography and other writings, there were a large number who attained the Path, Fruition and

96. *Nirodha:* Cessation. This with *Magga* (the Path) are the 3rd and 4th of the Four Noble Truths.

Nibbāna and quickly as well. There were far more than attain to it nowadays, for few people manage to get there now and far less than in those days. Also, those who do attain nowadays, seem to do so much slower."

Venerable Ajaan Mun immediately asked him:

"How do you know that there are hardly any who attain the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* nowadays, and that those who do, only do so much more slowly as you say?"

Venerable Ajaan Khao replied:

"Well, I have never heard of people attaining *Nibbāna* like they used to in those days, in accordance with what is written in the old books, when many attained *Nibbāna* simultaneously each time the Lord Buddha gave them a talk on Dhamma, and many others did so, going out to practise the way on their own. It also seems that they attained very quickly and easily and it is a joy to read about the results which they attained. But nowadays people strive until they almost die without seeing the type of results which one feels should come from such effort — which causes those who practise to become discouraged and to become weak in striving?"

Venerable Ajaan Mun then asked him:

"In the old books, does it say whether in those days all those who practised the way attained quickly and easily, or were there those who practised the way with difficulty, some gaining understanding slowly and some quickly, as well as those who practised the way easily, some gaining understanding slowly and some quickly — which would accord with their levels and characteristics, which are very different in different types of people?"

Venerable Ajaan Khao answered saying:

"Yes, they did vary quite considerably and they certainly did not all attain quickly and easily, and there were those who practised with difficulty, some of whom attained slowly and some quickly. But I still feel that it was very different from the situation nowadays even though there were various classes of people, as there still are nowadays."

Venerable Ajaan Mun then explained:

> "This difference comes from the leaders and how correctly and precisely they can lead the way; as well as from the power of the virtuous characteristics *(vāsanā)* of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* who followed the Buddha, which, when compared with us nowadays is so different as to be almost beyond comparison. An additional thing is the interest that people have in Dhamma nowadays, which is so different from the time of the Lord Buddha. Even the characteristics of people which are derived from their background in this life are very different nowadays from what they were in those days. So when there are all these differences, that the results should be the same is not really possible. But there is no need for us to talk about other people and ages, which would take a very long time and be tiresome. For in ourselves, we display a coarseness which disturbs us all the time, even though we are ordained monks who believe that we have zeal and are striving, sometimes by walking *caṅkama* and sometimes by sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā.* But these are just the bodily activities, whereas the heart is not striving in any way that corresponds to these activities at all. All it is doing is thinking in ways that accumulate the *kilesas* and disturb the heart all the time, while we believe that we are striving by means of these activities. When this is the case, the result is bound to disturb and trouble the heart regardless of when or where we are. Thus we conclude that we have been striving to our utmost and that we have not gained the results which we should have. But in fact we have been walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi* and at the same time gathering and accumulating poison which does nothing but harm to us without our being in the least aware of it. This is how we do not strive truly and properly as it should be done."
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> "Therefore there is really no comparison between the time of the Lord Buddha when their striving was genuine and they were truly concerned to gain freedom from *dukkha*, as against this present age where we just play, like children with their toys. In fact, the more we try to make comparisons, the more do we show off our *kilesas* and incompetence. For myself, even though I live in this age of insincerity and deceit, I do not agree with your criticising the Buddhist religion, as well as yourself as you did just now. If you still see that you have some virtue and truth left within you, you should try to act in accordance with the plan of action that the Lord Buddha taught so rightly. But not in accordance with the plan of action in which the *kilesas* lead you and drag you along in their way in everything you do, all the time

and every day — even while you believe that you are actually striving in the way of Dhamma. The Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* is a universal treasure and the Lord Buddha taught that it may be acquired by anybody, a treasure that will be for your satisfaction one day for sure, as long as you do not keep thinking how difficult it is and how slow your attainment comes, which is nothing but an obstruction in your way."

"When we practise and strive in the manner of someone who feels that his body will break up if he keeps on doing it, because he is so weak, lazy and irresolute, it seems to me that we are like lazy inconsequential fools who think they are going to bore a hole through a mountain using a small auger, and they are very anxious to do this within the time of a single day. It is so ludicrous that those who are truly wise with sharp wisdom and who really do strive, just laugh at it. We should think and look at the manner of striving of those who were sons of the Sākya — the *Sāvakas* of the Buddha at the time of the Buddha, and see how they acted, and then compare it with our own striving which is like someone who goes to the shore and just smacks the sea with his hand, which is enough to make us feel sorry and disheartened that his longing for *Nibbāna* is only to the extent of getting his hands wet! Look, think and see how the *kilesas* are like an ocean and the efforts we make are like the water on our hands — how far apart are they? People in this age of just "wetting their hands in the ocean" make little in the way of effort, yet their intention is to get free from the realm of *saṁsāra.* Then when this does not happen as they expect it to, they find some excuse to blame the religion *(Sāsana),* the time, the place and the people of this or that period of time. They are not in the least ashamed of the way in which they display their own incompetence and stupidity so that those *Ācariyas* who are truly wise and skilled feel disheartened and laugh wryly, saying that there is no way in which they can do anything about such people."

"To invest only a small amount of capital in a manner that is useless and then to expect the most enormous returns on one's investment is the way of an incompetent fool who builds his own charnel ground for cremating himself and remains submerged in the mass of his own *dukkha.* So the round of *saṁsāra* never weakens its hold on him so that he could feel that he may get free one day."

"The question that you asked me which was in effect praising the teaching of Buddhism *(Sāsana–Dhamma)* and praising the age, the place and the people at the time of the Lord Buddha, while at the same time criticising the teaching, the age, the place and people nowadays were the words of

praise and blame of an incompetent fool who puts obstructions in his own path until he cannot find a way to crawl out to safety. It was the question of someone who was incompetent, the question of someone who puts thorns in his own path to obstruct himself and not a question which was designed to clear the way and make it free of obstacles so that he can go ahead with confidence due to being interested in freeing himself from the *kilesas* by means of the *Svākkhāta* Dhamma (Well Taught Dhamma) which is the 'middle way' that was given impartially to all those beings in the world who have enough interest to practise the way rightly ever since its origins."

"If you will only have the mindfulness and wisdom to shed all these things from yourself you would be worthy of some admiration. This is like sickness and diseases which people get, both serious and mild. When people want to cure themselves and they take the right remedy they are likely to feel calm and easy and the cure is effective. But if they are not interested in looking after themselves and overcoming the disease, it will probably get worse and can become dangerous — except for minor complaints such as the common cold or minor skin troubles which cure themselves without special attention."

"The *'kilesa'* diseases, which are not in the class of self-healing minor ailments, must be treated with medicine, and the medicine is the Dhamma–way of striving following the pattern which the 'Sons of the *Sākya,* the Buddha's *Sāvakas* practised. One may be fully confident that this remedy will quell and get rid of all the *kilesas* whether strong or mild or however else they may be. If you were only to think in this kind of way I should feel more at ease about you and I could admire you for being someone who has clever ways of thinking and one who can have some confidence in his own ability to be able to pass beyond the realm of *saṁsāra* as well as having faith in the ability of the Lord Buddha and his religious Teaching *(Sāsana–Dhamma)* and faith that he penetrated Dhamma with his intuitive ability, and spread it abroad as the *Sāsana* Dhamma in a proper manner. And that this was a 'Dhamma of Salvation' *(Niyyānika–Dhamma),* truly able to lead beings to freedom. Not blaming and criticising himself saying that his *kilesas* are very thick so that he can only learn Dhamma slowly, while at the same time having no interest in curing them. Not blaming the Lord Buddha, saying that he did not formulate and teach Dhamma in a way that was equally suitable for his own time and for all other ages as well. Nor blaming the Dhamma, saying that it is incapable, or not penetrating enough, to cure the *kilesas* of beings in this modern age in the way it did at the time of the Lord Buddha."

Venerable Ajaan Mun continued, saying:

"I am not denying the fact that the strength of people's *kilesas* are different from what they used to be, and I agree that people at the time of the Lord Buddha had them far less than people do nowadays. The mode of teaching was also very different from what it is nowadays, as also were those who taught the way, and they were 'seers' in most cases, with great understanding and true seeing. For the Great Teacher was the Leader of the *Sāvakas* in formulating and teaching Dhamma to his followers and others. The teaching was therefore never wrong and never deviated from the truth, for it came straight from the heart of the Lord and from the hearts of his followers which were completely purified. From this purity of heart they drew out Dhamma and taught others in language that was fresh and direct without there being anything hidden or mixed in with it that was wrong or distorted."

"Those who listened to this Dhamma were intent on the truth and they had fully committed themselves to it. So the situation was entirely suitable on both sides and the results came stage by stage, being self-evident to them and fulfilling the expectations of these people who were looking for truth. Therefore they had no problems and questions which could interfere with their development. So it was that in those days, many people attained *Magga–phala* each time the Great Teacher or his *Sāvaka* Followers gave Dhamma teaching, whereas nowadays hardly anybody can attain. It is as though saying that people are no longer people and Dhamma is no longer Dhamma, so there are no results coming from it. But in fact people are people and Dhamma is Dhamma as they always were, but people are not interested in Dhamma now, so the Dhamma that enters into them does not reach the heart. The result is that people remain just people and Dhamma remains just Dhamma, which is not likely to be of much use in bringing about the final attainment. Even if a large number of people were taught and listened to an exposition of the whole *Ti–piṭaka,* it would be just like pouring water over the back of a dog — it immediately shakes it all off until there is none left. In this way the Dhamma has no meaning in the hearts of people, much as water is of no consequence on the back of a dog."

Venerable Ajaan Mun then asked Venerable Ajaan Khao:

"When you asked that question just now, was your heart like a dog's back? Or what was it like that you blindly put blame just on the Dhamma alone, saying that it had not brought results to yourself for attaining the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* the easy way — like it did in the time of the Lord Buddha without thinking about your own heart which was shaking off the Dhamma from itself faster than a dog could shake water off its back? If you will only reflect back and think about your own faults and failings, I think that some Dhamma will find a place to seep into your heart and remain there, not merely flowing through it like water flowing down a channel without any reservoir or storage place — which is how you are at present."

"Whether the people at the time of the Lord Buddha had few or many *kilesas* was just a matter of their own virtue or evil which does not effect us or make any difficulties for us nowadays. People nowadays have their own *kilesas* of various kinds which create trouble for themselves until there is hardly anywhere in the world where they can live normally. If people have not enough interest in curing themselves so that the world has some freedom from this trouble and freedom from the 'fire' with which they 'burn' each other, merely blaming and praising others, in whatever age they lived is not likely to be of any use at all. This is also true if each one of them is not interested in directing his blame and praise towards himself — towards this one who is creating the 'fire' to 'burn' himself and others causing all sorts of trouble now — in the present. For, turning one's praise and blame towards oneself is the way to break the 'fires' of lust *(rāga),* hate and delusion apart from each other whenever they are in consort together — at least, to the extent of having a way to go towards some degree of calm and happiness, so that one is not 'roasted' by these 'fires' beyond one's endurance. This is the way it should be in the world of human beings who are far more clever than any other species in the world."

Venerable Ajaan Khao said:

"Venerable Ajaan Mun used to scold and blame me very fiercely for asking such questions which had no practical solution, although I did not ask such questions very often. But when Venerable Ajaan took up these questions and analysed them, it was as if they were like thorns and splinters obstructing the *Sāsana*, himself and myself as well, for which there is

no available cure. It made me feel and see where I was at fault and I would feel uneasy about it for many days, even though in fact I had no doubt that people nowadays could practise Dhamma. But Venerable Ajaan would still scold me and 'shred' me with his fierce way of talking which I reckon was right and suitable for someone like myself who was always talking and could not be quiet and contented. On the other hand, this was also good in that I used to hear Dhamma from him, of a kind which went straight to my heart. In fact, what I have already told you is not more than a fraction of the deep, spirited and fiery Dhamma which he delivered, for it was deeper than the ocean and more fiery than the fire of hell. He would also bring up the questions which I had asked him in the past to stir me up time after time. Sometimes he would do this right in the middle of a meeting when all the others were gathered there to hear Dhamma and he would reveal my evil ways, talking about my wrong views *(micchā–diṭṭhi)* and likening me to Devadatta destroying the *Sāsana.* He would 'tear me into pieces', until there was nothing left that was good, and he would go on like this for a long time, not letting up easily, until some of the other Bhikkhus began to wonder about it. Afterwards they would come and ask me whether it was truly as Venerable Ajaan said. I had to explain how the questions I asked were not a true indication of my attitude, but that it was just a method of getting him to talk Dhamma. For normally, if nobody asks him some outlandish question he does not speak Dhamma to us. But I suppose I was rather stupid in the questions that I used, for I jumped in with both feet and gave him the hammer to hit me over the head with. Maybe I should have asked a more normal and less inflammatory question so that I could listen to Dhamma that was more sweet and soothing."

Generally speaking it was in fact as Venerable Ajaan Khao said, for if Venerable Ajaan Mun was asked questions that were not in any way strange or outlandish, he would just answer in a normal way. Then even though it was Dhamma, his way of speaking was smooth and normal and it made no lasting impression on one's heart. But when he was asked a strange, outlandish question he became quite animated and the import of the Dhamma which he brought forth was truly satisfying — as we have already described in Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography.

In truth, Venerable Ajaan Mun had no doubts about Venerable Ajaan Khao's views, although the way in which he scolded him made it appear as though he was doubtful. But in fact it was just his way of teaching Dhamma which was the way of a skilled *Ācariya*. For he would change his attitude and style of teaching in all sorts of ways to arouse and wake up the rest of us who were listening so as to make us think about and ponder his teachings which would act as a reminder to us for a long time. Otherwise we would remain supine, clinging to our own stupidity with no interest in thinking about anything at all — like a frog sitting and looking at a lotus flower without any purpose. But as soon as Venerable Ajaan "rapped us on the head with his knuckles", it was as though our ears and eyes became brighter. It is in the nature of those *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who followed Venerable Ajaan Mun that they liked being stirred up and "rapped on the head" frequently to hold their attention and make them think.

But if he talked in a smooth and even manner they would listen quiescently, with nothing to arouse and catch the heart to make it excited, concerned and a bit frightened. Their hearts then tended to go to sleep inwardly when there was no method nor anything else which was capable of making their minds active and thoughtful. Then various kinds of *kilesas* which had been waiting to take over were likely to find an opportunity to get out and go about causing trouble and disturbing their attention, because the method of teaching was not equal to the ability of the *kilesas*.

But when they got an unusual form of teaching from Venerable Ajaan Mun because he had been asked a question that warranted such a way of teaching, their mindfulness and wisdom was stirred up and became brighter and sharper. Therefore although in asking Venerable Ajaan Mun questions, Ajaan Khao was partly right and partly wrong, they were Dhamma questions from which he could expect to gain a lot of value in the same way as he had often done so in the past.

Venerable Ajaan Khao said that the first year that he spent the rains period *(vassa)* with Venerable Ajaan Mun in the Chiang Mai district, an indescribable enthusiasm *(pīti)* and joy arose. This was an appropriate reward for the several years in which he had tried to follow Venerable Ajaan, for even though he had heard his teaching at times in various places, he only stayed for brief periods

which were not truly satisfying. After staying for a short while he would be driven away by Venerable Ajaan who told him that they must stay in separate places. But when an opportunity came and his meritorious tendencies *(vāsanā)* were helpful he was allowed to stay for a rains period with Venerable Ajaan. This made him very happy and he increased his striving greatly until he was hardly taking any sleep at all, sometimes spending the whole night striving at his meditation practice. Then one day his *citta* became fully integrated and went down into a state of calm where it had a complete rest for some time before it withdrew and rose up out of it. He was filled with wonder at this brightness of the heart which went beyond what he had ever reached before and it made him completely absorbed in Dhamma until the light of dawn appeared. That night he did not sleep at all. In the morning he got up at the usual time and went about his duties, helping to clean and arrange things at Venerable Ajaan's hut and taking his bowl, robes and other things to his place where he ate food in the *sālā*.

When Venerable Ajaan came from the place where he did his meditation practice it seemed that he watched Ajaan Khao unusually closely. Ajaan Khao himself noticed this and felt very self-conscious and afraid that he may have done something or other wrong. After a short while Venerable Ajaan said to him:

> "How is your meditation practice going now? Last night your *citta* was much brighter than it has been in the past, ever since you have been staying with me. This is how you must do it! This is the right way for one who searches for Dhamma. Now do you know where Dhamma is? Last night where was that brightness?"

He answered, "The brightness was in my heart sir," but he felt afraid and ashamed until he almost started shivering, for he had never before been praised and asked a question at the same time like this. Venerable Ajaan Mun then asked him:

> "Where had the Dhamma been before this that you could not see it? That which you have seen is Dhamma and you must always know it in this way from now on. Dhamma is in the heart and in the future you must guard the level of your *citta* and the level of your striving so that they are kept well up and you must not let them deteriorate. For this is the ground[97] of

97. Ground, foundation, level or platform.

the *citta,* the ground of the Dhamma, the ground of your faith in Dhamma and the ground of the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* — all of them are just there. You must be confident and resolute in your striving if you want to transcend *dukkha;* and in doing this, you have got to do it just there, for it is absolutely certain that there is nowhere else where you can get free from it but just this one place."

"You must not indulge in wishful thinking, for you are no longer blind and there is no need to do so. Last night I sent the flow of my *citta* out to look at you and I saw your *citta* brightly illuminating everything round you, and every time I sent my *citta* out to look it was the same way throughout the night. Because I also took no sleep last night at all; part of the time I spent in *samādhi bhāvanā,* part of the time receiving *Deva* guests and part in sending my *citta* to see how you were getting on, and it went on like this until dawn without having any realisation of the time. As soon as I came out of *bhāvanā* I had to ask you about it, because I have always wanted to know about my fellows in Dhamma. Was it peaceful, was it blissful this time?"

Venerable Ajaan Khao said that he remained silent, not daring to answer Venerable Ajaan:

"For he had already looked right through me until he could see my lungs and liver and everything else, so what would be the use of telling him. From then on I was much more afraid of Venerable Ajaan and I was much more careful where he was concerned. Even before this I was quite sure that he could know the minds and hearts of people just as he wished. But that night I experienced it for myself which made me that much more certain and I became very afraid of him in a way that is hard to describe."

From that day on he was able to fix the state of his heart firmly and develop it steadily, more and more and bit by bit, without any deterioration or back-sliding at all. He said:

"Venerable Ajaan Mun used to goad me quite frequently. Any self-indulgence and I would be told off immediately and he would get fierce and scold me much more quickly than before. In fact his frequent exhortation and reminders were methods of helping me to look after my *citta* and Dhamma and to make me more afraid of deteriorating and backsliding."

> "From that time on I continued to spend every *vassa* period with Venerable Ajaan. After the *Vassa* I would then go out wandering to practise the way in various places, wherever I found it to be suitable for striving. Venerable Ajaan Mun would also go off, but in a different direction so as to be on his own, for he did not like going out with any of the Bhikkhus attached to him. So the Bhikkhus all went out in different directions, each as he felt inclined. But whenever some internal problem arose in their hearts, they would make for Venerable Ajaan to ask him about it so that he would unravel it and clear the problem which he did every time."

In this way it seems that the striving by way of the heart of Venerable Ajaan Khao progressed steadily. His mindfulness and wisdom gradually and steadily spread and branched out until it was infused into the heart and they became one and the same thing. Whatever his bodily posture or activity, he maintained his effort with mindfulness and wisdom present in his striving for Dhamma, and it seems that his heart was bold and courageous having lost all fear of those things which arouse and maintain thoughts and emotional states *(ārammaṇa),* which used to be his enemies. He was also certain of the path leading to freedom from *Dukkha* and he had no doubts about it even though he had as yet not actually attained freedom.

The Elimination of Avijjā

One evening after he had swept the ground he left the hut where he was living to go for a wash. He saw the rice growing in the fields and how it was golden yellow and almost ripe. This immediately made him think and question:

> "This rice has sprouted and grown because there is a seed which caused it to grow. The heart that endlessly leads one to birth, and death should also have something that acts as a seed within it in the same way as the rice plants. If that seed in the heart is not destroyed entirely, it is bound to lead to further births and deaths going on endlessly. Now what is this seed in the heart? What could it be but the *kilesas, avijjā, taṇhā* and *upādāna?*"

He went on thinking and searching into this problem, holding up *avijjā* as the target of his research, examining it, going towards the future, then returning towards the past, going forward and then backwards, with intense interest, wanting to know the true nature of *avijjā*. He went on searching and investigating in the field of *avijjā* and the heart, throughout the night without let up.

At dawn, just as it was beginning to get light his wisdom was able to break through to a conclusion. Then avijjā fell away from the heart without any remainder — and the contemplation of the rice stopped at that point when the rice was ripe never to sprout again. His investigation into the citta also stopped as soon as avijjā fell down, after which the citta became ripe in the same way as the rice became ripe. At this point it was clearly evident to him that the citta had stopped creating any more births into the various realms of existence. What remained made him full of admiration and satisfaction and this was the complete and utter purity of the *citta* in his hut in the midst of the mountains where he was supported and taken care of by the forest people.

> As soon as the *citta* had managed to go beyond the tangled jungles of the "round of kilesas" *(kilesa–vaṭṭa)* there arose the most wonderful thing to him alone as the dawn came. Then the sun began to shine its rays on the forest while the heart began to get brighter and brighter as it left the realm of *avijjā* and went towards the wonder of Dhamma where it reached *vimutti* — freedom at the same time the sun rose. It truly was a most auspicious and wonderful occasion.

After this supreme, auspicious and blessed moment had gone by, it was time for him to go *piṇḍapāta.* While he was walking away from this place of such great blessings he looked back at the little hut which had provided him with such happiness and such wonders, and he looked all around him and saw how everything appeared to have become superb and blessed in sympathy with the heart which was entirely and completely wonderful throughout — although in fact all these things were just there in accordance with their own nature as usual.

While on *piṇḍapāta* his heart was filled with Dhamma and when he looked at the local people of the forests and hills, who had looked after him, it seemed almost as if all of them were beings who had come down from the heavens. In his *citta* he reflected on how good, how virtuous and valuable they had been to him, so much so that it would be impossible to describe the extent of their

virtue. *Mettā* and compassion arose in him for these "heavenly" forest people and he could not help but spread out the *mettā* in his *citta* as a dedication to them as he passed by them all along the way until he reached the vicinity of the place where he was staying which was a place of such happiness.

While he was arranging the *Deva*–like food which the hill people had put into his bowl his heart was full of Dhamma. He did not turn his thoughts to the food as he had always done in the past, letting it bring him some pleasure, but he merely ate it as that which the body depended upon for its maintenance. He said:

> "Since the day I was born this was the first time that I had ever experienced the body and mind *(dhātu–khandha)* in perfect harmony with the *citta*–heart, but it is quite impossible to explain it. All I can say is that it was the most wonderful and unique experience and it became the most outstanding event of my life which left a deep and lasting impression on my heart."
>
> "After this world shaking event when the sky and ground collapsed and the 'Wheel of *Saṁsāra*' *(vaṭṭa–cakka)* in the heart broke up and disappeared, all the elements and *khandhas* as well as every part and aspect of the *citta* were each and all free to conform to their own natural state. They were no longer enslaved and forced into service by anything, so the five *Indriya* and the six *Āyatana* would continue to function and do their duties without any dispute or contention disturbing them, which had previously been their normal state, until such time as the elements and *khandhas* are no more (The dispute which he refers to is the disharmony between internal and external things when they come together, which gives rise to gladness or sorrow that then turns into the arising of *sukha* and *dukkha.* All these are interconnected like the links of an endless chain going on forever)."
>
> "The disputes within the *citta,* which are far more numerous and disturbing than those externally in the world, all stopped and were peacefully settled from the moment the 'court of justice' was built and completed in the heart. This endless tendency to create inappropriate disputes, which used to seize the *citta* and use it as a floor on which to dance, to quarrel and to argue, never giving it any time to be calm and quiet, because *avijjā–taṇhā* — the boss — directed and ordered it to work to cause turmoil and confusion of countless different kinds, then all dissolved into a joyful harmonious state of calm and peace. It turned into a world that is free and empty within the *citta,* where the superb and most excellent Truths of Dhamma

> *(Vijjā–Dhamma)* are produced and arise for the delectation of the realm of the '*citta*–king' in place of the former state of anti–Dhamma."
>
> "Affairs, both externally and internally then proceeded smoothly in accordance with Dhamma without being harassed and disturbed by an enemy. So the eyes saw, the ears heard, the nose smelt, the tongue tasted, the body felt things cold or hot, soft or hard, and the heart received and knew the various supporters of perceptions *(ārammaṇa)* in the normal way without distorting and altering everything as it used to, by making out that right is wrong, that being shackled is freedom, that what is bad is good, that ghosts are people, that virtuous Bhikkhus are evil ghosts *(Preta)* and conversely that evil ghosts are good people. For this is what the Lord of anti–Dhamma, who had the power to dictate actions used to do when he was in power. 'Now I can sit down and rest peacefully and whether I live or die I have complete happiness. This one, here, is genuinely out of *dukkha* and out of danger without any thread of attachment of any sort by which it is bound'."

This was the aphorism that Venerable Ajaan Khao exclaimed in his heart at that time.

Venerable Ajaan Khao was another of Venerable Ajaan Mun's followers who stripped away all *dukkha* and got rid of all dangers from his heart in Chiang Mai province. He said:

> "The place where I practised the way until I reached freedom from *dukkha* within me, the little hut which gave me shelter where I could practise and strive and also rest my body, the place where I walked *caṅkama,* the place where I sat in *samādhi* meditation by day and night, and the village where I went out for *piṇḍapāta* to get food for maintaining the body, while staying in that district, all made a great impression on me which went deep into my heart in an inexplicable way and far more so than any other place. This has remained buried in my heart right up to the present day and my memory of it has never become faded or indistinct nor has it become insipid or commonplace. From the moment when the 'Wheel of *Saṁsāra*' *(vaṭṭa–cakka)* was demolished and fell away from my heart, destroyed by striving, that place changed and became the abode of supreme happiness in all situations at all

times. It is as if I were in the presence of the Lord Buddha at the place of his Enlightenment and everywhere where he practised striving for Dhamma, and all uncertainty about the Lord Buddha was swept away. Even though he entered *Parinibbāna* a long time ago as reckoned by the usual conventions of time, yet it is as if the impression of him is permanently imprinted on my heart without fading after the time of his *Parinibbāna.* All uncertainty about Dhamma was swept away as to whether it is much or little, profound or shallow, and gross or subtle, which the Lord bestowed on all beings. He saw that all of those Dhammas are permanently established in this one heart and that it is completely filled with Dhamma, not being deficient in any part. All doubt and uncertainty disappeared concerning the *Sāvaka Sangha*, who are *Supaṭipanno* and who are pure. For these three 'Jewels' *(Ratana)* are fused into one in the heart which lives with *Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha,* each of which are pure and integrated together as one Dhamma."

"From that one moment I became completely contented and had no concerns or anxieties and there was nothing that could act as a burden and deceive my heart. Whatever situation I am in, I am my own master in that situation and nothing remains that orders me about or creeps in and ask for its share to eat and to use — like a parasite — as it used to when I was living with a beggar all the time, without realising it. Now it wanted this! Then it wanted that! All the time this is how it was in all situations."

Where this *Ācariya* talks of "wanting this" and "wanting that", he is talking about the *kilesas* which makes one (feel) deficient, in want and never having enough — for this is the way their inherent nature works. Once they have become powerful and established their position over the heart of a person or animal they are bound to demand or beg incessantly, for this is their natural way of acting. They do so by inciting one to think like this, to speak like that or to act in various ways according to their power, incessantly. If one doesn't have the Dhamma to block this "leakage" which comes from the stubborn demanding and begging of this gang of *kilesas,* one is likely to be divided up or spoiled so that they can "eat one up", until there is nothing left.

It can even get to the point where one has not enough virtue left to keep one going on in one's present state of life to enable one to be born again in the future as a good person with moral principles. Whatever form of life and situation one is then born into, it is bound to be the wrong place and the wrong situation. Where one will not be able to get the contentment of heart

in one's state of birth that one ought to get from a life in which one has made the effort throughout one's life to be born into such a state of contentment. Then one may be said to have both lost one's "capital" as well as getting no "interest" from it. In other words, one who is heedless and complacent gives power just to the *kilesas* to take charge of the house and look after the *citta* without any protection or resistance to them at all. Then they grab and take until he has nothing left, as we have already described above.

But one who has got rid of all his debts and put an end to the untidy mess in his heart continues to live happily in all situations in his *khandhas,* in which he lives. When their life is at an end he drops the burden of the *khandhas* and there remains just the purity of "Buddho" as his treasure, throughout. This is the ultimate and eternal end of all *dukkha* — a wonderful ending and a moment which has ultimate value, greater than anything in the three realms of existence in the universe. It is quite different from existence in all relative worlds of supposition *(sammuti)* where, in their various ways, beings want birth, or at least, most of them do so — and with their eyes wide open, and they are not in the least interested to consider the *dukkha* which is bound to come as a consequence of that birth.

The truth is that birth and *dukkha* cannot be separated and *dukkha* is still bound to be there even in those cases where it is minimal. The wisest of men are therefore afraid of birth more than death. Which is in contrast to most of us who fear death more than birth, while in fact death is only a result of its basic cause which is birth. This fear of death is a fear that is in complete opposition to the basic principles of nature and it comes about because people have no interest in searching and tracing out the truth about death, therefore they resist it, and *dukkha* is with them all the time.

If the wisest of men had *kilesas* of the kind which would make them ridicule and laugh at other's foolishness, they would probably not be able to contain themselves and may have to let it all out to their heart's content when they see almost everyone in the world setting themselves against the truth with determination. And this they do without ever looking around or searching for the basic principles of truth. But in fact these men are truly wise and worthy to be so-called, and they do not act in the usual way of the world. In fact they generally have *"mettā"* and compassion for the world and give help by teaching the way. As for those who are beyond all hope, they let them go their way as there is nothing that they can do to help them.

Venerable Ajaan Khao was one who transcended all the fear and danger that he used to have in *saṁsāra* and he reached *Nibbāna* while still alive *(Saupādisesa–Nibbāna)* when living in a place called "Roang Cod" in the Phrao district of Chiang Mai Province, in his sixteenth or seventeenth *vassa.* I cannot remember which, but I know that it was the beginning of the harvest time just after the end of the *vassa* period. He related all this in a manner which touched the heart one evening when we talked Dhamma together from 8 pm until after midnight and nobody came to disturb us for the whole of this time. Because of this we were able to talk Dhamma freely on both sides, right through to the final conclusion — which was the final result that arose from our practice of Dhamma. We started from the basic ABC's of our respective practices, which meant the basic training that we did which was rather mixed up, at times slipping back and scrambling up again, at times falling into a bad state, or a state that alternated between bad and good, and sometimes getting into a state of satisfaction or dejection which resulted from the ups and downs of the practices which we used in our initial training. We then went on right through until we reached the ultimate and final point of the *citta* and of Dhamma of each of us.

The result of our talk was very satisfactory and I have taken the opportunity of including it in this book so that those who read it and are interested in attaining Dhamma may use it as a field for investigation and contemplation and then decide what is suitable in it for them to use depending on their own characteristics. The result which is one's intended purpose and which comes from such a discriminating choice is likely to be a smooth and steady development that is right and appropriate, depending on how strongly one tries to do it. Because, Venerable Ajaan Khao is completely qualified to be a source from which things of great value can arise for those in the world who frequently associate with him. He is neither deficient in his behaviour which he displays outwardly, nor in his inward knowing of the way of Dhamma which is a "diamond of the first water" buried mysteriously within him. Such a thing cannot be found easily and if one has not narrowly escaped death one is not likely to be able to know it. I have secretly given him the name of "Diamond of the First Water," in the sphere of *Kammaṭṭhāna,* following the line from Venerable Ajaan Mun for the last thirty years without being afraid that people will call me mad — because this arose from my own faith. Venerable Ajaan Khao is still alive at present (BE 2520/CE 1977) and spreads out *mettā* and

warmth to many Bhikkhus and Novices as well as to lay people in all parts of Thailand who never stop going to pay homage and doing *pūjā* to him and to listen to his teaching. In his monastery they realise the difficulties that he must put up with, for he is already very old and they have had to arrange suitable times when people may visit him, pay homage to him and listen to his teaching so that he may have enough time to rest and recuperate and be of value to the world for a long time. Otherwise he may "break up" before he reaches his natural time.

The receiving of visitors and the interaction between those Bhikkhus who are acknowledged teachers and the many lay people who come from all over the place to visit them is in most cases very debilitating and somewhat of an ordeal for these teachers for the whole time while these visitors are with them. For these visitors come with all sorts of preconceived views and attitudes and generally they are very anxious to get confirmation of what they want in their own hearts. They never think of the difficulties and the disturbance that they cause in the teacher's normal daily routine, which means that they are often more disturbed than the water in a well or pond. If the teacher shows no sympathy for them they feel resentful and think that he dislikes them, that he is conceited and does not welcome guests as a Bhikkhu should do, for the purpose of overcoming his conceit and his dislike of others. Moreover, they then build up a dislike of him within their hearts and they spread this about telling everybody, which leads to endless harm. Those Bhikkhus who should be praised and respected and who are of great value to the lay people, may then become Bhikkhus who are under accusation without any court that can try the case and pass judgement.

The fact of the matter is that Bhikkhus are ordained for the purpose of bringing benefit both to themselves and to the world and not for remaining quiet, easy-going and unconcerned. In any one day they do various different kinds of work at different times and they rarely have any spare time. For they must find some time for helping the world in various ways; they must find time for helping the Bhikkhus and Novices who they are looking after as well as other Bhikkhus whom they chance to meet; and they must find time for looking after their own bodies and hearts so that they may last long and continue to be of value to the world for a long time to come. Both by day and night body and heart go round and round like a flywheel with hardly any time left to rest and relax. When one thinks about it, even the machines

which we use, such as motor cars, have a rest at times, or they need time off for maintenance and repair to keep them running properly, otherwise they break down and deteriorate rapidly.

Bhikkhus are not like stones and cement which are mixed up together and used in various places in the construction of buildings and houses as the chief builder or architect sees fit for his purpose. Therefore they are bound to get tired or exhausted and must have enough time to rest and relax for the strain of continued work, so that they can have some ease of body and heart.

Generally, when lay people visit a Bhikkhu, they are likely to come complete with their tendencies of character, pretensions, conceits and problems quite uninhibited. So they make trouble for the Bhikkhu by unloading their complaints and criticisms, expecting him to agree with them and to act accordingly, without ever considering whether it is morally right or wrong. This is due to their fundamental trait of having no interest in reason or morals — which are the first things that should be considered. Whenever any desire or want arises which requires the help of a Bhikkhu, they never think how the ways and customs of Bhikkhus and lay people differ — for the Bhikkhus have the principles of Dhamma and *Vinaya* to guide and direct their actions. So the ways and customs of Bhikkhus are the Dhamma and *Vinaya* which shows them what they should do, and they must always think of what is right or wrong, good or evil and consider whether any proposed thing should or should not be done. But lay people have no "Dhamma or *Vinaya*" within them to act as a guiding principle to control their actions and so, generally speaking, they tend to rely on what they like and want as their guide. Thus, when they try to get a Bhikkhu involved in their affairs he is quite likely to be troubled or harmed, even though they have no intention of doing this. Or he may be harmed indirectly by frequent requests — such as asking him to give them a number for the state lottery — which is an activity that conflicts with the Bhikkhu's Dhamma and *Vinaya.* Or by asking Bhikkhus to make love potions which cause a man and woman to love each other; asking Bhikkhus to tell them an auspicious time when they will have good luck and become wealthy — or for any one of a thousand other purposes; asking Bhikkhus to do their horoscope and to advise them about their affairs; asking for magic spells and sayings to make them invulnerable to bullets, knives, pointed weapons and clubs; asking for "holy water" to be sprinkled on them to annul perils, danger from enemies and bad luck; and all sorts of other things such as these. For

all these things conflict with the characteristics and customs (which means the Dhamma and *Vinaya*) of any Bhikkhu who gives in to them, and the more he is an *Ācariya,* a Teacher whom people respect and have faith in, the more he is troubled by all these things, which we have just described — and all sorts of other things of the same kind which would take all day to describe. In particular, a *Dhutanga Bhikkhu* who is intent on gaining understanding, Dhamma and freedom, following the lineage of Venerable Ajaan Mun is not in the least interested in all these kinds of things. In fact they look on them as being enemies to the right way of progress and as things which increase the delusions of people. In the worst case these things could lead to the destruction of the Bhikkhu and of the religion *(Sāsana)* for all to see, if, for example people started calling them "lottery number Bhikkhus" and the "lottery number religion", or "love potion Bhikkhus and religion" — and the rest. This would make the Bhikkhus and the religion seem disreputable and it would cause its value to deteriorate steadily and inevitably. This is the kind of result that can come from doing these things.

In all this that I have said above, I have no intention of blaming those good and faithful devotees of Dhamma — nor those who go to visit Bhikkhus to search for Dhamma. But it is necessary to let people know what is the right form of behaviour between Bhikkhus and lay people who have never been completely separate from each other — and how they should act and relate together so that both may have contentment and live without friction. This is how it should be and it accords with their mutual good intentions and the interdependence that has always existed between them — and also the way that both sides are concerned about the promotion and well being of Buddhism.

It is important that we Buddhists should clearly understand that the monastery is an important place in the sphere of Buddhism. It is also an important place to all Buddhists who can hardly avoid having good and exalted thoughts arising within their hearts whenever they go into a monastery or go past one. This is because "the monastery" has always been a sacred place since the remote past, regardless of whether it is in the villages or forests. For the monastery is the place where the *citta* and all things sacred come together, as well as arousing the good and high aspirations of endless Buddhists, leaving nowhere for them to leak away and deteriorate. The monastery may be run down and in a state of disrepair or well appointed and beautiful, but in the hearts of those everywhere who have faith in Buddhism there will be a constant attitude of respect and homage for it.

For these reasons, whenever Buddhists go into a Buddhist monastery and for whatever purpose, they should be self-controlled and make sure that their behaviour is sufficiently modest and suitable. This also includes the clothes that people wear and they should be very careful to make sure that they conform to their status as "children of the Buddha" who are going into a place which is high and sacred and which has been glorified by the Lord Buddha, the Great Teacher of the "Three Worlds". This is especially important in the "forest monastery", where Bhikkhus are a bit like the monkeys and apes in the forest who have never had the opportunity and fortune to have seen and learnt to admire the material progress and the latest cultural developments that have taken place in cities and towns. When they see people coming to the monastery wearing some of the latest fashions they feel unusually disturbed and apprehensive — almost dizzy and feverish. It may also give them a sudden fright which they have not experienced before, because they are used to living in the forest until they have become part of it and in such an environment it is not easy to imagine such things. So when they suddenly see such strange and unusual things, their eyes withdraw from Dhamma and the *citta* displays an abnormal state which fluctuates unsteadily which — tends to induce a melancholy depression.

Most forest *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* say that they have this same kind of reaction and we should sympathise with them. Even if someone merely explains to them how the towns and villages have developed in material things and culture and how they are developing all the time nowadays equally within the country as well as abroad, within the towns and in the countryside, in the village monasteries and those in the forest, and in normal places where people live, as well as in the forests and hills, they would most likely not believe it. In fact they would probably just have a feeling of repugnance and loathing for it all, and a feeling of apprehension as well as dejection and sorrow — until the person who was telling them would be unable to find any way to cure the fear and horror that they feel. So it's a pity that they are so primitive and so far away from all this development and civilisation — isn't it?

The monastery where Venerable Ajaan Khao stays, is located in the forests and hills. A place that is well suited to the complete development of meditation and the practice of Dhamma, for it is full of boulders, cliffs and forests

with pleasant, shady trees. It seems that Venerable Ajaan Khao always tried to avoid and evade all the accoutrements of civilisation which we have already mentioned. If one were to call him uncivilised like most of the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* it should not be considered as criticism. Because his Dhamma quality is very exalted — and I feel that he has gone beyond all that should be deserving of criticism. But presumably he may still have the habits left within him of being very watchful and afraid of the dangers in the forest, for even though his Dhamma virtue is at the highest level he will not have been able to let go of all his latent habitual tendencies. This may be in accordance with the Dhamma saying of the Lord, that — the original habitual tendencies cannot be entirely got rid of by the *Sāvakas* and only the Lord Buddha was able to get rid of his latent habitual tendencies *(nissāya)* completely, as well as his good characteristics *(vāsanā).*

Whenever many people come causing a lot of disturbance with no good purpose or value in it, Venerable Ajaan Khao gets away quickly and disappears into the forest or into a crevice between the rocks of a hill in his monastery until all has quieted down in the evening or after night has fallen, before returning to his residence. When he was asked why he escaped and disappeared in this way, he answered, saying:

> "My Dhamma is not much and it cannot withstand the strong flowing current of the world and I have to run away and hide. If I did not do this, but stayed and put up with it, my Dhamma would surely break up and disintegrate, so I must go wherever I can look after myself. For even though I do not have the ability to help these people, I should at least think about helping myself."

To the best of my knowledge, Venerable Ajaan Khao has a lot of *mettā* and generally gives a great deal of help to other people. But on those occasions when he escapes and goes into hiding it is probably because it is beyond his ability to put up with them — as he himself has said. Those who cause trouble and harm are the majority of people, though whether they do it intentionally or not is hard to know, but they do so continually. As for those who try to uphold and maintain *Sīla–Dhamma* and virtue, they are few and they are hardly able to withstand the burden of doing so, and are normally bound to run into many difficulties.

Generally speaking, lay people tend to watch the Bhikkhus much more than themselves. When they go to a place where they should have faith and

pay respect, their manner and speech tends to be quite offensive in the eyes and ears of an observer. It makes those Bhikkhus who are observant realise how it is their habitual tendency to let themselves go, without restraint and carelessly, while having no thought for how they might appear to other people, or how it is with themselves — this is what makes it difficult.

More About His Way of Practice

When Venerable Ajaan Khao was living in the forests and hills and he became unwell, he was never much concerned about finding medicaments to cure himself. He tended to rely upon the "Dhamma remedy" much more than any other way, for it was effective both in the body and the *citta* at the same time. He could grasp the problem and fix his attention on it and reflect upon it for a long time — much longer than usual. He managed to overcome fevers many times by this method of medication, until he became quite confident of this process of reflective investigation whenever he felt ill. It started from the time when his *citta* attained *samādhi,* or in other words, when he had a calm and cool heart. Whenever he had any fever he would set up a determination to fight it unwaveringly by meditating with a completely resolute heart which is the method that brought him clearly visible results in the past. At first he relied upon Venerable Ajaan Mun to guide him continually in the method of doing this when he had a fever, by recalling Venerable Ajaan Mun's experience in which he said how that, when his heart gained unusually great strength it nearly always came from severe sickness and pain. The more painful and sick he was, the more easily would mindfulness and wisdom go round and round the body, quickly going to each event and change of characteristics as it arose during the illness. There was no need for him to compel himself to look into the body and there was no interest at all in whether he would be cured or die. For his concern was to strive to know the truth of all the painful feelings that arose and "swooped down" on him at that time, using the mindfulness and wisdom which he had been developing by continuous training until he had become expert at it.

Sometimes Venerable Ajaan Mun would go to Venerable Ajaan Khao when he had a fever and talk to him to make him think by asking a pointed question, saying:

"Have you ever thought how in your past lives you have experienced pain and suffering much more acute than this, just prior to the time you died? Even ordinary people in the world who have learnt nothing of Dhamma can put up with the suffering of an ordinary fever. Some of them even retain good mindfulness and seemly behaviour — better than many Bhikkhus. For they do not groan and moan and restlessly move around, flinging their arms about while twisting and writhing, like some unworthy Bhikkhus who really speaking should not be Buddhists at all, and they should not be in such a position that they taint and soil the religion of the Buddha. For even though these worthy people may be in great pain and suffering they still have enough mindfulness to control their manners so that they are seemly and respectable, which is quite admirable. I once saw a sick lay man whose children had come to ask me to visit their father who was beyond hope of recovery. They said that their father wanted to meet me and see me and pay his last respects to me which would give him something to keep in mind and to raise up his heart when he came to the time of his death. When I got to the house, as soon as their father saw me walking up to the place where he was lying down, he managed somehow to sit up by himself and quickly too, his face beaming and happy. He did this despite his illness and despite the fact that normally he could not sit up without assistance — in fact all symptoms of his fever and illness had disappeared, but there were enough indications left to show that he was in fact seriously ill. He bowed down and paid homage with cheerfulness and joy in his heart and his manners and general behaviour were seemly and beautiful — which startled and perplexed everyone else in his home. They all wondered and talked saying: 'How did he get up by himself when normally to move a little bit to a new position while lying prostrate we have to help him all the way with great care, for fear that otherwise he may be hurt or faint or die right then. But as soon as he saw you coming, Venerable Ajaan, he got up like a new person — no longer like one who is about to die any time.' They were amazed, for they had never seen anything like it before. They came and told me this and that he died shortly after I left him and that he was fully conscious right up to the last moment and he seemed to die peacefully as if he had got to some state of happiness."

"But as for yourself, your fever is not severe like that man's, so why are you so careless and inattentive that you are not examining and investigat-

ing your situation. Or is it your laziness that is weighing your heart down and so making your body weak and flabby. If many *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* went like this, people would criticise the way of Buddhism, and the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* would fall apart. None of them would be able to put up with difficulties because they would all be weak and flabby. Their *Kammaṭṭhāna* would also be weak and flabby, just waiting on the block for the *kilesas* to come and chop them up and make salad of them. The Lord Buddha did not give the teaching of mindfulness and wisdom for lazy, weak and flabby people who merely look at their sickness without thinking, searching and investigating in terms of Dhamma in the way that has been taught to us. For whether such a weak and lazy person gets better or dies from his illness is of no consequence — in fact it's no more worthy than the death of a rat. You must not bring the beliefs and knowledge of a pig into the *Sāsana* and the circle of *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus.* For a pig just waits for the 'chopping block' quite unconcerned. It makes me feel ashamed in the face of those lay people who are more worthy than such Bhikkhus; and ashamed in the face of the rats who die peacefully and better than such Bhikkhus who have a fever and become weak and lazy, and die without any mindfulness and wisdom to look after themselves. You should try doing some investigation to see whether the Dhamma truths *(Sacca–Dhamma)* — such as the truth of *Dukkha* — which the wise say are Dhamma of the highest truth — are in fact true and how true and where the truth in them is to be found. Or, does the truth dwell in carelessness, weakness and laziness which you are promoting at present? For this is just promoting the cause of *dukkha (Samudaya)* so that it accumulates in the *citta* making it stupid and preventing you from rising out of it. It is not the way of the Path *(Magga)* — which leads one to nothing but freedom from *dukkha*."

"I am prepared to claim that I have gained strength of heart when I have been very sick by examining the *dukkha* that arose within me, until I saw the place where it arose and established itself and also its dying away and ceasing, by means of true mindfulness and wisdom, quite clearly. The *citta* that knows the truth of *dukkha* and becomes calm and peaceful does not go about looking for something to change its state, but instead, remains firmly within the truth and is 'one' and single. There is nothing in it to cause trouble or unseemly actions, nor can anything strange or false get into it to cause any doubt or uncertainty. Then painful feelings cease completely, or else, even

if they don't, they are still quite unable to overcome the *citta*. Each of them would then be true, each in its own sphere.[98] This is when the Dhamma Truths are the highest truths, and this is how they are true. In other words, you live with that *citta* which has mindfulness and wisdom everywhere about oneself due to having done the practice of investigation. Not due to laziness and weakness, nor due to sitting or lying down on top of mindfulness and wisdom, the tools which are capable of curing the *kilesas*."

"Here is a simile to help you understand. If you take a stone and throw it at someone's head it can cause injury and maybe kill him. But you can also make valuable use of that stone for sharpening knives, or other purposes. Accordingly, someone who uses it to damage or kill himself is a fool, whereas one who uses it for a good purpose to help himself in desirable ways is clever. Mindfulness and wisdom are like this, for they can be used wrongly to think and work out ways of doing things that are morally not right. Such as being clever in the wrong way, in one's work and business. Clever in robbery and banditry. Being slick and quicker than a monkey so that others cannot follow what one is up to — which usually turns to evil because of using mindfulness and wisdom in wrong ways."

"But one can use mindfulness and wisdom in the right way, as in one's livelihood, by using it in such things as building work, in carpentry, in writing or in repair work of various kinds in which one is skilled. Or one may use it to cure one's *kilesas* and *taṇhā* which are sticky and stuck firmly to the hub of the wheel of the round of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa)* which leads one round to birth and then on to death repeatedly and unceasingly, until they have all gone from the heart. Then one becomes purified and reaches the state of freedom *(vimutti), Nibbāna,* maybe today, or this month or year, or in this lifetime, for it is not beyond the ability of human beings to do this, as we may see by the example of those clever people who have done so from the Lord Buddha up to the present day."

"Wisdom brings endless benefits to anyone who has enough interest and incentive to use contemplative thought without fixing any bounds or limits to it. Because mindfulness and wisdom have never deceived and led anyone into a state of despair with no way out, making them afraid that they will have too much mindfulness and wisdom and that it will turn them into someone who is good at breaking up and destroying whatever Dhamma they

98. In other words, the feeling is a true, existent phenomena and the *citta* is also true and existent; each of them existing truly and separately in their own natures.

had within them, as well as their chance of attaining freedom, and that they would be swamped and overcome while they were only half way there."

"The wisest of people have always praised mindfulness and wisdom ever since ancient times, saying that they are the most exalted things and are never out of date. You should therefore think and search and dig up mindfulness and wisdom and promote them as the means and method of defending yourself and destroying the enemy within you completely and finally. Then you will see the most excellent and precious sphere of heart that has always been there within yourself since endless ages past. This Dhamma that I am teaching to you comes entirely from the Dhamma that I have looked into and experienced as a result. It is not based on guesswork — like scratching without being able to locate where the irritation is — for what I teach comes from what I have known and seen and been, with no uncertainty."

"Those who want to get free from *dukkha,* yet are afraid of the *dukkha* that arises within them and refuse to investigate will never be able to get free from *dukkha.* Because the way to *Nibbāna* has to depend on *"Dukkha"* and the "Origin of *Dukkha*" *(Samudaya)* to walk the Path *(Magga),* the means of going onwards. *The Lord Buddha and every one of the Sāvaka Arahants attained the fulfilment of the Path, Fruition and Nibbāna by way of the Four Noble Truths (Ariya–Sacca–Dhamma).* There was not one of them that did not pass through these four Noble Truths completely — and now, some of these Noble Truths are displaying their truths within your body and heart quite openly and clearly. You must investigate those truths, using mindfulness and wisdom to get to know them clearly and genuinely. You must not sit or lie down merely gazing at them or you will become an invalid in the field of the Dhamma Truths which have always been true since the beginning of the world."

"If we *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* cannot face the truth which is displaying itself so clearly to us, who else will ever be able to face it and know it? Because those in *Kammaṭṭhāna* circles are closer and more intimate with the Dhamma Truths than those in other circles elsewhere and they should be able to know and realise them first, before all others. In other circles elsewhere outside of *Kammaṭṭhāna,* even though they will also have the Dhamma Truths as an inherent part of the body and mind, yet they differ in that they avoid doing any investigation which would lead them to understanding them in a different way. This is due to their disposition and opportunity which influences them variously in different ways."

"But the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* is in a special situation, in that everything is complete for him to progress and to walk towards the truth which is apparent within him all the time. If you have the blood of a warrior who is worthy of the name given by the Great Teacher which is: 'the True Sākyaputta Buddhajinorasa (Son of the Sākya, the Victorious Buddha)', you must try to investigate so as to realise the truth clearly. This truth of painful feeling, is announcing its presence within you in a clear and unmistakable manner in your body and mind right now. Don't let the painful feeling and this opportunity pass by uselessly. But instead, I want you to take out the truth from that painful feeling and bring it up to mindfulness and wisdom. Then mark it well, define it and let it be known and bury it in the heart firmly and indelibly. From then on, it may act as an example to show that out of these four aspects of Truth which the Lord Buddha proclaimed throughout his teaching, I have now gained a clear understanding of this first Truth, the Truth of *Dukkha* by means of my mindfulness and wisdom and there is no longer any room left for doubt. But rather, I will endeavour to promote and to make that Truth develop steadily and increasingly, until every bit of doubt has disappeared."

"If you strive to do what I have just taught you, even if that fever that you have becomes increasingly strong in your body, it will be as though you yourself are perfectly well and fit. In other words, your heart is not disturbed, apprehensive and shivering, nor caught up following the characteristics of pleasure and pain which arise in such circumstances. But you will have a steady sense of pride and satisfaction which will come from what you have known and seen in a calm, steady manner. You will not display any outward behaviour, restlessly moving and changing about as the fever gets worse or better. This is what is meant by learning Dhamma for the Truth, and the wisest people have all learnt it in this way. They do not wishfully imagine other types of feelings as they would like it to be — thinking how they would like this or that kind of feeling according to their desires — all of which just accumulates the "cause of *dukkha*" so that it increases and grows much stronger instead of going the way one should want it to go. *You must take this to heart and remember it well and go on investigating to find the meaning of Dhamma which is the Truth that is within yourself.* This is the basic ground which each should be able to know by himself, for I am just the one who teaches the way to do it. But as to whether the pupils are fearless and valiant

or weak and flabby depends entirely on those who do the investigation and no one else has any say in this at all. Well now! For yourself, you are a pupil and you have a Teacher who teaches you, so you must act in a suitable way as befits this situation. You must not lie down inert, like a rag for wiping peoples feet, letting the *kilesas* rise up and walk all over you to beat you out flat. This would be disastrous and bring nothing but trouble in the future — now don't say I haven't warned you!"

Venerable Ajaan Khao said:

"When Venerable Ajaan Mun gave me this Dhamma talk, it was like a violent storm that comes and then passes away and disappears. I felt as if I would float up into the air with rapture *(pīti),* joy and 'heartfulness' from this teaching which was so skilled and penetrating and came entirely from his sympathy *(mettā),* and nothing else could have been so valuable to me at that time. As soon as he had gone I took up the practice of the methods in which Venerable Ajaan Mun had so kindly instructed me, and I started to examine and unravel the problems of the painful feeling which was presently apparent to the utmost of my ability, without any tendency to want to give up doing so, or any other forms of weakness at all."

"While I was doing this investigation of painful feeling after Venerable Ajaan had gone, it was if he were still there sitting with me waiting to see and waiting to show me how to do it and to help me the whole time. But more than that it gave me strength of heart to increase my fight with painful feeling."

"While doing the investigation I tried to separate *dukkha* out from the *khandhas.* In other words, the body and all its parts I put into one heap *(khandha);* memory *(saññā)* which stands by to define or determine, thereby deceiving us, I divided into a second heap; *sankhāra,* which is thinking and imagining I put into a third heap; and the *citta* I put separately into a special category. Then I investigated, I compared, I looked for causes and results from the start to the end of the *dukkha* which was making itself apparent in my body, milling around in confusion. But I did not think about whether the *dukkha* would die away and I would survive or whether it would get worse and I would die, for what I was absolutely determined to get to know for my purpose at that time was the truth of all these things. In particular I most wanted to find out what in fact the 'Truth of *Dukkha*' *(Dukkha–Sacca)*

was. Why should it have such power as to be able to shake up and disturb the hearts of all beings throughout the world without exception? This is the case, both when *dukkha* arises in normal circumstances due to all sorts of different causes, and also when they reach the end of their lives and they are just about to leave this life and go to a new state. All sentient beings of every kind feel very apprehensive at this time and none are ever bold and fearless enough to face up to it and accept it — except when they have to face it because there is no other alternative and no way out. If there was anyway to avoid it they would be bound to escape to the other end of the world to get away from it — just because of the fear of death."

"I am also one of these sentient beings in the world who are timid and frightened of *dukkha,* so what should I do about this *dukkha* that I am now experiencing in order that I may be bold and fearless, with the truth as my witness. Well! I must contend with *dukkha* by using mindfulness and wisdom following the teaching and method of the Great Teacher and my own teacher as well. A short time ago, Venerable Ajaan Mun had the *mettā* to teach me in a way that went to my heart and left me no room for doubt. For he taught me that I should fight using mindfulness and wisdom by separating and analysing these heaps *(khandha)* and examining them to see them quite clearly. Right now, what *khandha* is this painful feeling *(dukkha–vedanā)?* Is it 'form' *(rūpa)?* Or memory *(saññā)?* Or thought and imagination *(sankhāra)?* Or is it consciousness *(viññāṇa)?* And can it be the *citta?* If it cannot be, then why do I make out that the painful feeling is me? — That I am painful? — That it is truly me? Am I really this painful feeling? — Or what else am I? I must find out the truth of this today. So if the painful feeling does not stop and I have not come to know this painful feeling quite clearly with true mindfulness and wisdom I shall go on sitting here in meditation until I die if necessary. But I will definitely not get up from this place just to let the painful feeling laugh and mock and ridicule me."

"From then on, mindfulness and wisdom went about chopping up and analysing in what became a life or death struggle, and this battle between the *citta* and painful feeling went on for five hours. After this I knew the truth of the *khandhas* and I was able to know each one on its own. But in particular I knew the feeling group *(vedanā–khandha)* most clearly by means of wisdom."

The painful feeling then died away immediately, once the investigation had gone round everywhere about himself completely and thoroughly. He said that from that

time on an unshakeable faith in the validity of the Noble Truths arose in him, based upon the Truth of Dukkha.

"From then on I knew the truth of it without any doubt or uncertainty."

He then said:

"From that time on, whenever I got a fever or any other sickness my heart had a way to contend with it and to get on top of it by the way of mindfulness and wisdom — not falling into a weak and flabby state of illness. For generally, my heart gained strength in times of pain and sickness, because these are times of serious concern and maybe truly a matter of life and death as well. The Dhamma which I used to believe in as if it were a plaything, without realising it, which is the usual characteristic of an ordinary person *(puthujjana)* at normal times when he is not in any special difficulties, then displayed the truth for me to see clearly at that time while investigating the painful feeling all round. The pain then ceased, and the heart became concentrated and went down and reached the base of *samādhi.* All doubts and problems with regard to the body and mind then ceased while they were at rest, until the *citta* arose up out of it, which took several hours. Whatever else needed to be investigated would be dealt with in the future with ruthless regard for the Truth which had already been seen."

"When the *citta* became concentrated, went down and reached the basis of *samādhi* due to the powerful influence of the investigation, the fever ceased immediately and did not return again. It was quite extraordinary how this could happen."

In regard to this, the writer believes what Ajaan Khao said without question, because he also has done such investigations in a similar manner and has experienced the same kind of results. This makes me feel fully confident that the "Dhamma remedy" is quite able to take care of sickness in subtle and strange ways and to appreciate those who do the practice and have tendencies of character in this direction.

Most of the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* like to do such investigations as a remedy for their own body and mind *(dhātu–khandha)* when they become seriously ill with painful fevers. But they like doing it quietly, on their own and they do not readily tell other people about it — except amongst their friends who are also doing the practice in the same way and who have similar characters. With them they can talk intimately about these things.

It must be understood however, that in talking about curing diseases by the method of meditation in the foregoing paragraphs, this does not mean that all diseases can be cured by such methods. Even the Bhikkhus are by no means sure which diseases can be cured in this way and which cannot. But they are not inattentive or negligent in regard to whatever happens and to whatever changes take place within themselves. *Even when it happens that the body is going to die due to a disease, they must also make sure that some of the diseases of the citta die at the same time by using the power of the Dhamma remedy, and this means some of the "kilesas" and "āsavas" which are the diseases of the citta.* Therefore they are relentless in their investigations into the various diseases that arise, both in the body and in the *citta*. Because they are confident that this is an important and necessary duty in connection with their *khandhas* and *citta* — which they must investigate and accept responsibility for, right up to the last moment.

Venerable Ajaan Khao always liked to deal with his fevers by using the Dhamma remedy. At one time he was staying in a hilly part of Sakon Nakhon Province which at that time was infested with malaria. One day after he had finished eating his food he immediately began to feel feverish and shivery. He wrapped himself in several blankets to keep warm, to no avail. He looked about for a warm place but it was useless, so he gave up trying to get warm by external means. Then he decided to overcome the external feelings of cold internally by the way of Dhamma which he had already used with success in the past. He told the other Bhikkhus who were with him, to go away and leave him alone and to wait until they saw that he had opened the door of his little hut before coming to see him again. After all the Bhikkhus had gone he began to get down to the practice of investigation of painful feelings in the way that he had done it before. It seems that he started about 9 o'clock in the morning and went on until 3 o'clock in the afternoon when he succeeded. The fever died away and he was cured right there; and then the *citta* became concentrated and went down and reached its natural level where it rested for about two hours. Finally at about 6 o'clock in the evening he left the place where he had been practising *samādhi* meditation, with a buoyancy of body and heart without anything left to cause him trouble. The fever had completely gone and his *citta* had become bright and skilled with wisdom, exalted and famous within himself — and he has lived with the *Vihāra–Dhamma*[99] since then, right up to the present.

99. *Vihāra–Dhamma:* Dwelling in and with Dhamma. In other words, Dhamma is constantly present in the *citta* in terms of thought, contemplation and attitude.

Venerable Ajaan Khao is resourceful and absolutely resolute in striving and it would be hard to find anyone else to equal him. Now he is old and frail,[100] but when it comes to striving in the way of Dhamma he is still very skilled and resolute without weakening, much as he always was. When he walks *caṅkama,* each time he goes on for five or six hours before taking a rest, and even the young Bhikkhus cannot equal him. Such is the striving of the wisest men who are so very different from the rest of us who tend more to look forward to the time when we can rest our heads on our pillows. As if pillows are more exalted than the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* — which, when one looks at it and thinks about it, should make one ashamed of how clever one is in those ways which are completely lacking in essential value.

An unusual and remarkable thing about Ajaan Khao is how whenever he thinks about anything, that thing comes in accordance with his thoughts almost every time. For example he may think about an elephant which he had not seen for many years and how it had not been seen here at all — or maybe it had been shot by a hunter. Then in the middle of the night after such thoughts, this elephant would come straight up to his hut and stand there playfully touching and stroking things round about so as to let him know that he had come. After which it would turn and go back to the forests and hills and he would see no more of it for it would not normally return. When he thought about any of the tigers, the same sort of thing would happen. If he thought of a tiger which used to roam about the district and how he had not seen it for ages, and perhaps it had been killed, when he thought of it in the day, that tiger would come at night and wander about the Wat and about where he was staying so as to leave marks to let him know that it was still alive. Then it would go back to the forest and would not stay about there or return again.

He said that it was very strange how whenever he thought of any animals round about, the one he thought of would soon appear, and this happened almost every time. It was as if something went and told those animals to go to him. But a Bhikkhu who is so exalted inwardly as Venerable Ajaan Khao must surely have *Devas* to wait on him all the time, to help him and make things convenient for him and to follow his thoughts and wishes. Then whatever he thinks about, that thing will come to him in answer to his thoughts whatever it may be. Otherwise, why should things come to him right after he thought about them every time, like this? For other people such as ourselves can think

100. This was written before he died.

about innumerable things and go on thinking over and over again about them without seeing anything coming in answer to our thoughts and desires. At least, nothing which should make us think that we may have some virtue and that we are people who are worthy of reverence like Venerable Ajaan Khao. But then our thoughts are mostly so worthless or evil and disturbing to the heart, which gets nothing but difficulty and torment from them, without seeing anything good concealed within them at all. It is really shameful that our thoughts create nothing but *dukkha* for us, thousands of times per day until our minds are dull and worn out and incapable of doing any more work.

Venerable Ajaan Khao has a very large number of followers including Bhikkhus, *Sāmaṇeras* and lay people from all parts of Thailand who regularly come for teaching and training in *Sīla* Dhamma from him. Although nowadays he tries to live quietly and to be on his own much more than he used to, so as to preserve the *khandhas* and extend their life as far as he can — and also to be of value to those in the world who he should accept and help, and there are very many of them.

After he has finished eating his meal he usually starts walking *caṅkama* and working in the ways of Dhamma practice for one or two hours. Then he leaves the path where he walks and goes back to his room where he rests and does meditation practice until two o'clock in the afternoon. If he has no other business to attend to he then walks *caṅkama* again and works at his practice until it is time to sweep the paths and clean up the Wat. After this duty he has a wash and then returns to the *caṅkama* path and walks while doing his practice until ten or eleven o'clock at night when he stops. From then on he does some chanting and meditation practice until it is time for him to rest his body until about 3 o'clock in the morning. In other words, 3 am is the time when he gets up to do his meditation practice until it is time for him to get ready to go *piṇḍapāta.* After returning from *piṇḍapāta* he takes food to give his body strength to go on living for as long as his *vipāka* (results of *kamma*) will let him. This is the daily routine which he strictly adheres to, unless he has other necessary duties which he has to do, such as being invited to go out to various functions which necessitates a break in his routine.

Those who have such exalted Dhamma virtue as Venerable Ajaan Khao are not concerned to search for happiness and joy from anything so much as from the Dhamma within their own hearts alone. Their way of living is replete with Dhamma inwardly, and whatever the posture or situation of the

body, their hearts are in a constant state of happiness which neither increases nor decreases. For increase and decrease are a pair of opposites which is the way of our world of duality. The reason why they are like this is because they each have a heart which is single and pure throughout and imbued with the "one Dhamma" — alone *(ekībhāva).* This makes no relationship with anything else such that there would be a duality, with one standing out better and more prominent than the other. Therefore there is a peace and happiness in it which cannot be compared with anything else. For the *citta* which has purity throughout its nature is a *citta* which has a calm, peace and happiness which is entirely satisfying and there is no desire for anything else to increase or develop it, for it would only cause turbulence and concern in vain without being of any value at all to that *citta*. So those who possess such a *citta* like to dwell alone and they have no liking for distractions and disturbances because they are things that trouble the calm and happiness in this natural state which is complete in itself. For such things cause the *citta* to stir and vibrate and to receive knowledge via the various sense doors. This is why they like to slip away and live in a way that suits them — which is the most appropriate and right way for their characteristic tendencies. But others, who do not truly understand their ways are likely to think that they do not want to receive guests, or that they do not like people and they slip away to save themselves alone, and they are not interested in teaching and training other people. But in fact the truth is as we have described it above.

As far as teaching goes it is hard to find those who teach with complete purity of heart and filled with *mettā,* without any interest in worldly gain or any recompense at all, such as Venerable Ajaan Khao. Because in teaching people of every level every class and every age, they teach with true knowing and true seeing that is completely genuine and aimed at bringing benefit to whoever receives it and they do so with *mettā* in a manner that is unimpeachable. The only exceptions are in those cases when some people go and trouble them with irrelevant and unnecessary things like those we have described above. So they may not receive and teach everyone who comes, because it is not possible for a Bhikkhu to act in wrong ways just to comply with the unreasonable requests of those who do not keep within the limits of what is reasonable and proper. For the Bhikkhu himself would become involved, be in trouble and come to loss together with the one he is sorry for.

For some years Venerable Ajaan Khao spent the vassa period in the hills on his own while relying on two or three families of farmers to give him food when he went out on *piṇḍapāta* each day. He said that for those who are ordained, this type of life provides the most happiness and peace of heart for the practice of Dhamma. All one's time is filled with the effort to practise the way and there are no other burdens or duties to trouble one. One's time is one's own, one's effort is one's own in every situation and the *citta* with Dhamma is one's own in all that one does, and there is nothing to distract one and divide up one's attention causing it to diminish below what it had been before. One who is ordained and who lives in the present as if tonight is the only night left to him, is not concerned how much longer he is going to live, nor with any of these disturbances, for this that he is doing is of incomparably greater value than anything else.

Venerable Ajaan Khao said that when he spent the *vassa* period by himself in the hills along the borders of Sakon Nakhon and Kalasin Provinces, he lived in a place three or four miles distant from the nearest village. There were many wild animals in that district, including tigers, elephants, wild oxen, red bulls, barking deer, wild boar and deer of various kinds. At night he used to hear these animals calls echoing through the forest, and they would wander in search of food, often coming close to where he was staying almost every night. Sometimes he could see them and they came so close to him he could almost make out what kind of animal it was. Seeing these animals made him feel joyful, with *mettā* and compassion for them.

I cannot remember what year it was that Ajaan Khao spent the *vassa* period in these hills but I know it was soon after Venerable Ajaan Mun had died. He said how, in this *vassa,* when he practised meditation for *samādhi* it seemed that Venerable Ajaan Mun came to visit him constantly throughout that *vassa* to talk Dhamma to him and give him "friendly Dhamma advice" *(Sammodanīya–Dhamma).* In doing his routine duties in the vicinity of the cave where he stayed, and in all other activities such as arranging his few possessions, if he did anything improperly, Venerable Ajaan would point it out to him every time. Therefore it was just as if he had lived with Venerable Ajaan Mun for the whole of that *vassa* period.

Venerable Ajaan Mun came and told him about the customs and traditions of the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* who are intent on attaining freedom, saying:

"The various *Dhutanga* routines should be maintained and done properly in the way that the Lord Buddha prescribed and they should not be altered." Then he talked about the *Dhutanga* practices that he taught his followers to do while he was still alive and he repeated what he said for emphasis, thus: "In teaching my followers to practise the way throughout right up to the end of my life, I taught those *Dhutanga* practices which I knew about with certainty — without any doubt at all. Therefore you should take them to heart and practise them with a full and complete commitment — and you should never think that the *Sāsana* is exclusively the treasure of the Lord Buddha or any one of his *Sāvaka* followers. For in fact, the *Sāsana* is the treasure of whoever cherishes it and is interested enough to practise the way and thus includes everyone who aims to gain value from the *Sāsana*. The Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* retain no part of the *Sāsana* which they gave to the world fully and freely and you should not think that the Lord and the *Sāvakas* would dispense both parts which were good as well as parts which were bad or tainted. For when we practise the way, whether we do so rightly or wrongly in any part of it is up to each one of us and in no way does it depend on the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas*."

"You have come here to practise the way, and this is your own particular purpose; whether you practise rightly or wrongly is also entirely your own business. Therefore you must be very careful in what you do so as to live contentedly in the Dhamma of one who has seen the truth *(Diṭṭha–Dhamma)*. You will shortly become an *Ācariya* with many followers and you must set a good example to show what is right and seemly so as to be an exalted symbol of righteousness and truth and a blessing to all who follow after you — so that they who follow you will not be disappointed. Being an *Ācariya* is a very important position and one should examine what it means carefully. For if just the *Ācariya* himself goes wrong he may also lead many others in the wrong direction. But if he does what is right, he can equally lead countless others in the right direction. You should therefore examine carefully, all aspects of what it means to be an *Ācariya* with many followers so that others may have an unobstructed, smooth path which will not be false because of taking you as their *Ācariya* to teach them. The word *'Ācariya'* means one who teaches or trains his behaviour which is displayed externally in his actions and manners, in such a way that those who depend on him can hold him up as an example to be followed. It should not be the kind of behaviour which

is an external display of what comes from falsehood due to a lack of prior consideration and thought. The Lord Buddha who we call the '*Sāsadā*', the great teacher of the world, was not the *'Sāsadā'* only at those times when he was giving a talk on Dhamma to those Buddhists who came to listen to him. For he was the *Sāsadā* at all times, in every situation and position and whether reclining on his right side in the 'Lion Posture', sitting, standing, or going about the place. Even when he was within a Buddhist monastery, he would still be the *'Sāsadā'* in all his behaviour in every action and every movement he made, and the Lord never did anything that was uncharacteristic of the *Sāsadā.* Therefore one who has mindfulness and wisdom and an inclination towards assessment and contemplation could take every movement and every gesture that the Lord made as a moral example that teaches people over and over again."

"You should not think that the Lord ever behaved in an abandoned manner, like all people in the world, where they like to adjust and change their manners and behaviour depending on the people and circumstances that they come across. For they behave like this in one place and act like that in another — which is the characteristic behaviour of ghosts and *Pretas,* even though they are in fact people — good or bad. They are to be found everywhere, and they have not got enough of a presence in them which can be held on to as a firm, stable principle, either for themselves or other people. But the Lord Buddha was not like these people of the world, for he was the Great Teacher in everything he did right up to the day of final *Nibbāna*. Whatever action or characteristic he displayed he was always the *'Sāsadā',* never deficient or incapable. So whoever holds to him as their 'refuge' — which means a basic principle or example of how one should act and do things — can do so at any time, in whatever they are doing, by following his example, without any doubt as to whether the example of the Lord is suited to this occasion or not. This is why the title of the 'Great Teacher' — the *'Sāsadā'* — of the Triple world system is well suited to the Lord. Even when the Lord was about to enter *Parinibbāna,* he did so in the 'Lion posture'. He did not lie down, as though he had thrown away his limbs and body, careless of them, afraid of death and repeating *mantras* and magical verses so that he would go to this or that place or realm — which is the way of ordinary people everywhere in the world — but he died and entered *Parinibbāna,* composed, in the 'Lion posture'. Meanwhile, his heart

went through the process of 'entering *Nibbāna*' with unwavering courage and discipline — as if he was about to go on living in the world for aeons of time in the future. In fact, the Lord proclaimed that he was the Great Teacher at these final moments by entering *Jhāna and Nirodha Samāpatti*[101] and then withdrawing from them until the right moment came and he entered *Parinibbāna,* fully supporting his status as the Great Teacher without any remaining attachments to anything in the Triple world. That was how the *'Sāsadā',* the Great Teacher showed an example which was a standard pattern for the world to emulate, and he did this from the moment of his Enlightenment to the time of his *Parinibbāna.* Nor did he diminish or give up any of his standards of behaviour below that required of the 'Great Teacher' by behaving in the manner of the average, ordinary person, for he dutifully maintained his position to perfection right to the end."

"Therefore you should take up the example of the *Sāsadā* and put it into practice. For even though you will not be able to match the perfection of the Lord in all respects, it will still be in the category of one who follows the word of the Teacher — not drifting uncontrolled like a boat in a storm adrift in the middle of the ocean which has not put out its anchor. The practice of someone who is ordained, but who has no right and firmly founded basic principle within him is likely to be without any real purpose that can enable him to determine whether he will reach a shore of safety — or whether there will be various dangers ahead. He is like a boat without a rudder and is not likely to be able to sail where he wants to go — and he is likely to drift with the ocean currents which can easily lead him into great danger."

"The principles of Dhamma and *Vinaya,* such as the *Dhutanga* observances, are the 'rudder' of the practice which lead it to a safe goal. Therefore you should take hold of them and grasp them firmly, without wavering or vacillating, which would lead those who follow you, who will be many, to uphold this example and go wrong accordingly. The *Dhutanga* observances are the practices which go straight and directly towards the goal and there is no other practice that can equal them in this. It requires only that those who practise them must also use mindfulness, wisdom, faith and effort in striving to do so. That Dhamma which they are hoping to attain should be within the scope of the *Dhutanga* practices that have been handed down to us and it is quite certain that they are capable of leading us to it without any doubts or obstacles being able to prevent us. For the *Dhutanga* observances

101. The attainment of the cessation of feeling and memory.

are the only way which leads to the beyond of *dukkha* — there is no other way — so you should not feel uncertain or have doubts. This way of Dhamma is also the place where all the methods of practice and development gather together and lead into the process of quenching all *dukkha*."

"Those Bhikkhus who have a liking for the *Dhutanga* observances as their mode of development are those who have love and faith in the Great Teacher, who is the First Teacher. Whereas those Bhikkhus who have taken up the *Dhutanga* observances as their way of progress are those who have an established tradition and the Great Teacher as their refuge in every situation. Wherever they go or stay they have Dhamma to help and protect them in place of the *Sāsadā*. They are not lonely, aimless or unstable, for their principle of heart is the principle of Dhamma and this principle of Dhamma is the heart. Their breath going in and going out is Dhamma and it is intimately blended into a single unity with the heart. These people are the ones who are eternally living with Dhamma and they never become disturbed nor off balance. For yourself, it is true that you do not have anything to worry about, but there are many other people who will associate with you and you should have concern for all those who follow you, both fellows in Dhamma and lay people as well, so that they may feel contented in the practices which they have picked up from you that they are a means of making progress and that they are the right way and correctly portrayed, without error."

"This is how he taught me!" said Venerable Ajaan Khao.

He said further that if he slept over the time for him to wake, even just a little, Venerable Ajaan Mun would come and point it out to him, saying:

"Don't trust yourself more than Dhamma, for 'yourself' is the round of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa).* The elements of the body and the *khandhas* are the result that have come from the round of *saṁsāra,* right from the beginning. You should only give way to it to the extent that is necessary — but you must not give way to the *khandhas* more than you have to. For to do so is against the way of a Bhikkhu whose nature is not inert or careless. Sleep and lying down for those who are truly wise, is only for the purpose of giving a temporary relief to the elements of the body and the *khandhas* and they do not look for pleasure or contentment from easing off the tiredness and weakness of these elements and *khandhas.* The Bhikkhu who lies down as

a Bhikkhu should, must be careful to remind himself of the time to get up — like the mother of a deer who lies down to rest when out looking for food who must be more mindful and careful of herself than normal. To 'lie down properly'[102] means, to be careful to set up mindfulness to make the intention to get up at the time that one decides to get up before going to sleep — not lying down in the manner of one who sells off worthless goods, letting the customer give whatever he feels like giving for them. The Bhikkhu who lies down, letting his body go however it will is not a Son of the Sākya, a Buddhist who guards the religion, promoting it in himself and others, but a Bhikkhu who 'sells things having given up trying, letting the buyer fix the price'. To lie down properly in the manner of a Bhikkhu who is endowed with *sīla* and Dhamma as religious duties, a Bhikkhu must have a regular pattern of procedure to follow before going to sleep and this habit makes him careful and self-possessed when he lies down properly to sleep. As soon as he wakes up he must get up quickly, not lingering, which is the way of a lazy person who tends to get up late — and who dies immersed in careless indifference, never waking enough to become aware of himself. Lying down in this way is the way of an animal whose self has no meaning in its own life — and it is also the manner of a lazy person who destroys whatever value he has and is unable to rise up and improve himself. This is not the way of the *Sāsana* and it should not be allowed to develop, for it will become a 'parasite creeper' growing within the *Sāsana* and within the whole company of *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* which will be one's own undoing, for a 'parasite creeper' destroys the tree on which it depends. You should think about and compare the two concepts of 'lying down properly' as against 'lying down' in the usual way which everyone understands. Compare them and search out where they differ and how very different is the meaning in the 'lying down properly' of a 'Son of the Sākya' as against the ordinary 'lying down' of people and animals everywhere. Therefore, the attitude of a 'Son of the Sākya' who sets his mind to 'lie down properly' each and every time should be an important duty which cleaves to him, then and at other times also. This is appropriate to one who is said to wear the mantle of mindfulness and who has the wisdom to think with understanding and to use thought and contemplation in everything that happens. Not just thinking, just speaking, just acting, just lying down, just waking up, just eating,

102. In Thai, the normal word for "to lie down" is "nawn". But for a Bhikkhu there is a special word "chum–wad". To distinguish the difference, I have used the phrase "to lie down properly" for the latter word. (Translator)

just taking his fill, just standing, just walking, just sitting down, all of which are just the behaviour of carelessly relaxing and going beyond the status and basis of a 'Son of the Sākya' who should never act in these ways."

"It is generally understood by people that after the Lord Buddha and each of the *Sāvaka Arahants* had entered final *Nibbāna,* they went into oblivion and no longer had any meaning or relationship to oneself and other people. But this Dhamma, which is the basic causal condition that teaches us to practise in the present, is this not the Dhamma of the one who dug deep, searched and brought it up for the World to see and to follow in practice? And the whole body of this Dhamma, how did it remain, and why did it not go into oblivion also? The fact is that both the 'Buddha' and *'Sangha'* are the pure heart which has gone free, beyond the limits of both death and oblivion by virtue of its nature. How could it die, be consigned to oblivion or become meaningless when its very nature does not accord with 'relative convention' *(sammuti)?* When its nature no longer accords with relative convention, it is not subject to the power of death, nor going into oblivion, nor becoming meaningless. Thus, Buddha is 'Buddha' in its own right; Dhamma is 'Dhamma' in its own right; and *Sangha* is *'Sangha'* in its own right; and they are not shaken or disturbed by any of the ideas, attitudes, concepts or thoughts of the relative world of conventions which create and destroy themselves. Therefore the practice of 'Dhamma which accords with Dhamma'[103] is the same thing as being face to face with the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the *Sangha*, the whole time that one has 'Dhamma which accords with Dhamma' within the heart. Because the knowing of 'Buddha', 'Dhamma' and *'Sangha'* by natural principles, must arise in the heart which is the most suitable dwelling place for Dhamma and no other vessel is more appropriate to it."

This was the teaching with which Venerable Ajaan Mun admonished Venerable Ajaan Khao in his *samādhi* meditation practice when he saw that he had erred in some way. As for example, in practising the *Dhutanga* observances incorrectly or not strictly enough, and waking up from sleep at the wrong time. He said:

"In truth, Venerable Ajaan Mun did not admonish me just with the idea that I had done something wrong. But rather with the understanding that: 'This *Ācariya* will be associated with many people including Bhikkhus,

103. *Dhammānudhamma.*

> Novices and a large number of lay people in the future.' Therefore, he advised and admonished me often, so that: 'This *Ācariya* will become strict and fully conscious in 'recalling the duties' so that he will pass them on to all the other Bhikkhus and Novices who come to live in dependence on him for peace and help, and they will be good and worthwhile things'; in the same way as Venerable Ajaan Mun led his followers to practise the way."

Venerable Ajaan also taught him that all one's possessions, such as the bowl, kettle, robes and other things which one uses in one's dwelling should be put down or put away properly and tidily — including also, such things as rags for wiping one's feet. If one sees that any of them are not clean enough to be used one should take them and wash them before putting them to further use. After using things one should put them away, or fold them up and put them away tidily — not just leaving them lying about all over the place. If on any one day this *Ācariya* became too absorbed in some other affairs that came and intruded into his life which made him forgetful and careless, he would see Venerable Ajaan coming to him in the middle of the night while he was practising *samādhi* meditation and he would admonish him and teach him and point out the way of Dhamma to him.

He stayed alone in this cave for the whole of that *vassa* period, and at night he was frequently visited by Venerable Ajaan Mun who appeared to him as a *nimitta*[104] of his meditation practice. Even sometimes in the middle of the day when it was very quiet and he was sitting in meditation, he also saw Venerable Ajaan Mun coming to visit him in the same way as he did at night. He said that it was very pleasurable for him to be able to ask Venerable Ajaan all sorts of questions to make his understanding quite clear. For he was most proficient in answering questions with great skill and dexterity and he made the answer so clear as to remove all doubt and uncertainty every time. With some types of questions he only had to have a feeling of uncertainty, although he did not think of asking about it. But at night when he did his meditation practice, Venerable Ajaan would come and teach him, bringing up that question to explain, as though he had just asked him about it. He said how strange and wonderful it was — but he could not tell anyone else because they would probably pass him off as a "mad *kammaṭṭhāna* monk". But generally speaking, the Dhamma which cures the various *kilesas* only came from *samādhi* meditation and it arose from *nimittas,* such as that of Venerable Ajaan Mun coming frequently, to ad-

104. See footnote number 65 on page 154.

monish him, to show him the right way and to give him Dhamma teaching. This promoted his mindfulness and wisdom, making him think and consider carefully, leaving no room for carelessness.

He said how the *vassa* period which he spent in that cave in the desolate jungle, enabled him to develop various skilful methods which arose both internally and externally and very frequently at all times of the day and night, and this was in marked contrast to all other places he had been in. He is one who lives in the present[105] with joy in Dhamma in all postures and situations. Whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down he is filled with the bliss of Dhamma *(Dhamma–Pīti)* in the midst of the Peaceful Dhamma *(Santi–Dhamma)* that is his basic, original ground, which is completely pure amidst the various kinds of Dhamma which come and go, making contact with the heart, and which then display their meaning in their various ways, refreshing the body and mind and making them joyful. Like a tree which is being cared for and supplied with fertiliser and water, and grows in a suitable climate and environment which always keeps it fresh and moist both in the trunk and throughout all its branches, twigs, leaves and fruit.

Venerable Ajaan Khao said how, when the *citta* has only the present alone with the calm and peace of Dhamma, regardless of how much it gets involved in turbulent, confusing and distracting things, we people still have nothing but happiness while living in the world of involvement with our own *khandhas.* There is no need to struggle to find happiness and contentment in other places or realms — which would be creating images to deceive ourselves, causing us to become ambitious and to develop craving *(taṇhā)* and the "uprising of *dukkha*" *(Samudaya)* — the "seed" of *dukkha* — that would come to "burn our own fingers" and so make for a lot of *dukkha* and difficulty in vain. Because the happiness which we know, see and live with dwells in "that heart", and it is a happiness which is already sufficient and complete. This entire world and all other worlds, however many there may be in the universe of *saṁsāra* then seem as if they did not exist. But that which does exist and which is quite clear and apparent is the *citta* with Dhamma which seems to cover the whole universe *(loka–dhātu)* — though to explain this or to make any comparison with it is impossible, because there are no characteristics or data by which one can classify it. For the *citta* and the "Ultimate Dhamma" *(Acchariya–Dhamma)* belong to each other and they are not within the realms of convention *(sammuti),* so there is no basis for making any comparisons or suppositions.

105. Literal translation: "... one who has a single time..." In other words, all times are the same in the present.

After the end of that *vassa* period, those lay supporters who had helped him and looked after him with faith in him, invited him to come to where they lived and begged him to have *mettā* for them and to be a Teacher to them, their village and the whole district of Sawang Daen Din in the province of Sakon Nakhon. So he had to leave the place where he had been staying, even though he longed to go on staying there and he had not thought of going elsewhere for a long time. When he had taught the villagers for some time, he took his leave of them and went wandering wherever he felt like going in the manner of the practice of *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna.* Sometimes he crossed the Khong River (Mekong) into Laos and stayed on the banks of the river and at other times he crossed back into Thailand. After this he went wandering and practising the way in an area that is mountainous and covered with thick forests called Mor Tong jungle, which is in the districts of Bung Kan and Phon Phisai. In this area there are many places which are good and suitable for practising the way and there were some newly established villages made up of only a few houses. The people there invited him to spend the *vassa* in that place for their benefit, and as it was a place which suited his temperament, he agreed to stay there for that *vassa* period.

While he was staying and practising Dhamma in the hills of the Phon Phisai district, he said that he was fascinated and glad at heart to see all the different kinds of animals there and he had much *mettā* for them. The animals he saw included: wild fowl, pheasant, all sorts of birds like hornbill and peacock, as well as animals like the palm civet, barking deer, wild boar, ordinary deer, monkeys of various kinds, gibbon apes, wild dogs, tigers, leopards, elephants, wild oxen, and red bulls, each of which were far more prolific than elsewhere. They wandered about in packs by day and night and he could hear their cries echoing loudly through the forest, each group coming regularly at the same time every day. Some days when he went out walking for *piṇḍapāta,* he would see a large tiger walking most gracefully in the forest ahead of him. It was quite close to him, walking fearlessly, proud and dignified which is its nature. He said that when it was walking in the forest ahead of him where there was a clearing, it was beautiful to see the way it walked. The first time he saw the tiger, it glanced at him just momentarily and went on walking without looking back at him again as though it was not in the least afraid of him. But inwardly

it was probably careful and watchful, which is in character for an animal that has good mindfulness and is inherently cautious and that does not easily let go and become fascinated with anything. As for the *Ācariya,* he had no thought of fear of the tiger because he had seen them before on many occasions and he had heard them growling and roaring so often while staying in the forests in all sorts of places where it was quite normal for such animals to live all the time, so he was quite accustomed to them and had no fear of them.

One evening while he was sitting and teaching the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* to the Bhikkhus who were staying with him, who were about three or four in all. He said that they heard three large, playful and reckless tigers roaring, each one in a different direction. After that they heard them growling threateningly at each other with some fighting and then they went completely quiet. After a while they heard them growling and fighting close by. At first they heard them playing and fighting beyond the area where the Bhikkhus were staying and then when they became quiet it seemed as if they had gone elsewhere. But wherever the tigers may have gone when they were quiet, at about 9 pm, they mutually decided to move in under the floor of the small meeting hall (*sālā*) where the Bhikkhus were sitting in *samādhi,* listening to the Dhamma teaching. The floor of the *sālā* was just over one meter above the ground and the sound of these tigers roaring and growling and fighting together was such that the *Ācariya* had to shout at them, saying:

> "Hey! My three fiends! Don't make such a noise; the Bhikkhus are listening to a talk on Dhamma. This is bad and evil and you could end up in hell — don't say I didn't tell you. For this is not the place for being boisterously noisy and you should all go away and roar and growl elsewhere. This is a monastery for Bhikkhus who like to develop calm, unlike yourselves — so go and roar somewhere else to your hearts content, where nobody will come to disturb you. In this place, the Bhikkhus practise the way of Dhamma and they do not give you permission to make a lot of noise and disturbance."

As soon as they heard Venerable Ajaan Khao shouting at them they went quiet and still for a short while, but then they could still hear them, as if they were whispering to each other quietly under the *sālā,* saying:

> "We better not make much noise, the Bhikkhus are annoyed and shouting at us, so we must talk quietly or it will be bad and evil and we may soon end up with sores on our heads."

But after a while they again started growling and playfully fighting each other and they did not seem to want to go elsewhere, as Venerable Ajaan had told them — and they mutually decided that under the floor of the *sālā* was the place for them to play and have fun from dusk until midnight when they all went away. Meanwhile the Bhikkhus remained sitting there doing their *samādhi* practice after Venerable Ajaan had finished his teaching while the three large tigers were playing and fighting and growling and making a lot of noise under the *sālā* until they went into the forest at midnight. After which, the Bhikkhus left and went, each one to the place where he was staying.

This incident was most strange and unusual. For, as Venerable Ajaan Khao said, he had been wandering about in the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* in the forests in all sorts of places and different districts for many years and he had never before known or heard of tigers coming so close in a friendly manner, as if they had been close friends of the Bhikkhus for a long time. Normally, tigers are afraid of people by instinct, even though they are so powerful that they make people more afraid of them than almost any other animal. But generally, tigers are more afraid of people than people are afraid of tigers, and they avoid and keep away from people. Yet these three tigers seemed to be not only, not afraid of people, but they even went to the extent of taking possession of the space under the floor of the small *sālā* to play and have fun together while a lot of Bhikkhus were gathered right above them. It seems that they were not in the least afraid of the Bhikkhus who were people, much the same as other people everywhere. This was quite remarkable, for such animals know nothing of *Sīla–Dhamma* (morality), which all people know about, yet their behaviour in coming into close proximity to the Bhikkhus made it look almost as if these tigers had a good understanding of *Sīla–Dhamma,* which they put into practice in the way that people do. They never once displayed any menacing behaviour towards the Bhikkhus, although they probably did so towards each other in the knowledge that they all understood what their intentions were.

While listening to Venerable Ajaan Khao telling me about this incident I felt as if my hair was standing on end with fear, even though it took place a long time ago — which was silly. Foolish, silly people are like this, for even if the *Ācariyas* tell them stories of all sorts of things that have happened, which have a moral of Dhamma buried in them, foolish and incompetent people are not likely to listen for the purpose of extracting the moral teaching from it. Instead, they stick just to the thread of the story itself which shows their lack of skill. Like the writer who showed fear shamelessly in front of Venerable

Ajaan Khao while listening to his story. But in addition, the writer is also displaying his timidity in this book for those who read to laugh at him — which is bad enough! But having read this, please be careful and don't let this kind of story penetrate into your heart to haunt it, or many of you are likely to become timid and silly people also!

Venerable Ajaan Khao said how most of the Bhikkhus who listened to his teaching on that night, and sat doing *samādhi bhāvanā,* were stirred up and frightened both at that time and after they left the *sālā* also. Their eyes and ears were wide open when they heard the "three great teachers" coming to give them training and to help Venerable Ajaan by staying under the *sālā.* For their normal characteristic behaviour mixed with playfulness made the Bhikkhus who were sitting in *bhāvanā* frightened and rigid. They did not dare to let their *cittas* wander out and away freely, for fear that these three teachers would decide to jump up and give them "instructions" on the floor of the *sālā* in various ways. But it was most praiseworthy and good of these three animals that they did nothing that was excessive or violent or beyond what was reasonable such as getting onto the floor of the *sālā.* They knew what their basic situation in life was, and to some extent what that of the Bhikkhus was, and they did not go beyond what was proper for them in their situation for their activities were all gentle and harmonious — then they left and went away. After that they never came back again, although the district where the Bhikkhus were staying was a place where tigers and all sorts of other animals wandered about. There was never a night without some tigers wandering about the area, because it was a most suitable environment for all sorts of forest animals to stay in. For it was all hills and jungles and very extensive, so that if someone were to walk right through it, it would take him several days. There were all sorts of animals there, as we explained above, but there were large numbers of each type. There were many herds of elephants and packs of wild boars and each group was composed of many animals — and they were not much afraid of people.

The year that Venerable Ajaan Khao stayed in the Phon Phisai district all sorts of skilful ways and methods arose in him and he often had to warn and remind the other Bhikkhus who were with him not to be careless in maintaining the *Dhutanga* observances. For they were living in the middle of many

things which made it necessary for them to be careful, by depending on the *Dhutanga* observances as their life line, with the Dhamma and *Vinaya* as that to which they fully entrusted themselves in both life and death. In this way, they could live happily without being scared and apprehensive of all sorts of things which might otherwise make them jump with fright. They ate very little food — just enough to act as a "medicine" which supported their bodies and minds *(dhātu–khandha)* and kept them going from day to day. For there were few faithful lay supporters, the village having been recently formed with only a few houses and it had still not become firmly established. But it was the intention of these Bhikkhus, who had pledged themselves in Dhamma, to train themselves to put up with difficulties for the sake of the Dhamma of living inwardly in a state of peace. So they were not much concerned about their living conditions, nor whether they got a lot of food on *piṇḍapāta,* for such things would otherwise become an obstacle in the way of what they were trying to do. As for medicines and remedies for sickness, they had confidence in putting up with the pain and fighting the sickness by striving hard in *samādhi bhāvanā.* They also thought of their friends — the animals who lived in the forest about them — and took them as an example, for they never had any medicines available to them; nor were they born in a hospital with doctors and midwives to aid them. Yet here they were! Animals of all sorts, quite able to keep their family lines going, and in large numbers too! And they never show any grief or disheartenment at their lack of medical attention from doctors, nurses and all sorts of medicines and medical devices and machines. Whereas, the Bhikkhus are of human birth and are "Sons of the Sākya" — the lineage of the Buddha. The Great Teacher, whose name resounds throughout the "Triple Universe", and who learnt everything in the "books" of the three levels of existence by means of endurance *(khanti),* effort *(viriya),* wisdom, skill and ability in all ways. Never was he caught at a loss, unable to find a way out, nor was he ever weak and lazy and inclined to give up. But if we Bhikkhus retreat, shedding tears just because of the suffering and hardships of the aches and pains as in fever of sickness, which is a natural condition for these *khandhas,* we are bound to lose out and go "bankrupt", and we will not be able to guide ourselves or the religion properly. For unless we are courageous and firm, putting up with conditions *(sabhāva)* as we find them — having, living and experiencing them all with mindfulness and wisdom to assess and know each and every event which comes into association with us, there is no way to save oneself and escape to a lasting and safe haven.

When the *citta* has been trained in the right way it will find joy in Dhamma, gladly guiding oneself into the methods of the "Path and Fruition" without changing course or creating obstacles to cause more trouble to oneself. The practice of the way will then steadily progress without slipping backwards and feeling disheartened, that one has no refuge either outwardly or inwardly. For one will have the "heart with Dhamma" to cleanse, to soothe and to protect and look after one, causing one to feel affectionate warmth and peace of heart. Then wherever one goes or stays one is inherently content *(Sugato)* in the manner of those who are followers of the *Tathāgata,* without any signs of being hard up and impoverished in their hearts. This is how those *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* who are intent on Dhamma, go about and live. So they can stay anywhere and go anywhere, for they are prepared to put up with hardship and hunger while remaining contented and free from anxiety about anything, with Dhamma as the object of attachment *(ārammaṇa)* of their hearts.

It may be difficult for the reader to accept some of the things that happen in connection with the forest animals that like to come and live close to Bhikkhus. Therefore, to begin with it may be better to think about the domestic animals which people like to look after with *mettā* in their homes and in the monasteries where they go for sanctuary. In the monasteries, the number of animals such as dogs and birds which want to live in the monasteries increases every day, until there is hardly any room left — or trees left for the birds — where they can all stay.

Having thought about the domestic animals with which we are all familiar, we may go on to consider the various kinds of forest animals which tend to hang around and live about the places and monasteries where *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* stay. The writer has already written much about these animals in Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography and elsewhere in this present book also, where many incidents are related of animals coming to live near the Bhikkhus all the time and they all know by their own experiences that these stories are true.

This is something we should think about from the viewpoint of Dhamma, for it is the principle of nature of giving peace, and it is a "Dhamma" that is inherently suited to all beings of all kinds in this world. Nor is it necessary that any of these animals should understand what this "Dhamma" is. But that which manifests in their experience makes all beings glad and happy to ac-

cept it, everywhere throughout the world, and none of them are ever averse to it. This thing is the natural Dhamma which manifests as calm and happiness, as peace, as trust and confidence, as good will, as *mettā,* as affection and compassion, and as tolerance in which others are free to come or go as they will, without fear or danger. These are some of the things which flow from this Dhamma, and animals of all kinds like it and readily accept it without any need to go to any school to be taught about it. Because the *citta* and the outflow of Dhamma are a pair which should be together, far more than the possession of any external titles, rank or authority, which are like ornaments added to oneself that can dissolve and disappear depending on circumstances which are fickle and uncertain. Therefore, even though the animals have never known what Dhamma is, they will generally search on their own for those things which they naturally like and tend to accept readily, like the way in which stray dogs go and stay in a monastery, and forest animals go and live by *Dhutanga Bhikkhus.* Because the animals understand that Dhamma — which means peace and security — is to be found in that place, so they search for it in their own way. Even those people who have never had any interest in Dhamma, know those places which are secure and safe and they like to go wandering having fun and playing in such places. This has been the case right through from ancient times to the present, because it would not be safe to act like this in other places.

This explanation should be enough for us to understand how Dhamma and the place where people live and practise Dhamma is the place where animals and people everywhere feel confidence and freedom from danger. So they tend to relax and dispense with their usual caution, and there are some who go so far as to forget themselves completely, without thinking how other people feel about it and whether their behaviour is appropriate to Bhikkhus who are the "treasure" of their country. For those who practise Dhamma, generally know what is good and what is evil. They know good people and bad people, good animals and bad, in the same way as people do everywhere. So people should think of others and how they also cherish their "treasure", and they should not let go of all restraint everywhere. For there are always limits and bounds within which people and animals should remain, each in its own situation and they should not mix up their relative modes of behaviour until one cannot tell who is who, because they are all behaving in the same way.

Venerable Ajaan Khao liked wandering about searching for secluded places and he frequently moved from place to place. Normally he liked to wander in the manner of *Dhutanga* practice in the forest and hills where he was staying, and he also liked to change the place where he did his practice very frequently. Thus for example, he would go to stay in a certain place as his base, but in the morning he would go off somewhere else to do his practice. Then in the afternoon or evening he would go to another place, and at night he would wander off to yet another place — all in the vicinity of his "base". He used to change the direction he went in, sometimes going far and sometimes close by. At times he would change to another cave, moving from the cave which was his "base" and he would go up to the top of the hill or to a rocky outcrop, returning to his base dwelling late at night.

He said that the reason he acted like this was because when he was in confusion and disturbed while curing his defilements *(kilesas),* he found that by changing his situation in various ways, such as this, wisdom would arise all the time. Then none of the defilements were able to get a grip on him, because they were up against the skilful ways of mindfulness and wisdom which beat them into a corner, trapping them in various ways so that they were forced out and got rid of time after time. If he had stayed in just one place he would have got used to that place and settled down there, but the *kilesas* would not become used to it nor settle down and they would keep increasing regardless of whether he was used to anything or not. So he had to change about and alter his methods and his environment very frequently in order to keep up with the deceptive tricks of the *kilesas* which plant themselves and develop and increase and fight against oneself incessantly without ever taking time off for a rest. If there is any respite from them, it is only in deep dreamless sleep; otherwise they are working all the time. Because of this, in striving to develop oneself, if one relaxes, weakens one efforts and puts off doing the practice, letting time slip by, it encourages the *kilesas* which laugh and gain heart! By changing one's place and methods of practice very frequently, one can see one's losses and gains against the *kilesas*, which gives them no chance to feel satisfied that they are the sole master in charge.

His reasoning was most intriguing and what he said was an excellent example for those who do not let the *kilesas* rise up and walk all over them due to an easy going over confidence ruining every move that the *citta* makes.

Venerable Ajaan Khao liked to wander in the districts of Phu Sing, Phu Wua, Phu Lanka, Dong Mor Tong, in the districts of Ampher Seka and

Ampher Phon Phisai in Nong Khai Province; as well as Ampher Baan Phaeng in Nakhon Phanom Province.[106] In these places there are plenty of hills such as Phu Sing, Phu Wua and Phu Lanka, which are all good places and most suitable for the practice and development of Dhamma. But they are far away from villages — too far to go *piṇḍapāta,* so it is necessary to have some people who take turns to bring food. All these places were full of wild animals of all sorts, including tigers, elephants, wild oxen and red oxen, amongst many others. In the afternoon and evening one could hear their calls and roars echoing throughout the forest. Anyone who had not truly overcome death would find it difficult to stay there, because there were many tigers in those places, far more than in other parts of the forest, and they were not afraid of people. Some nights while walking *caṅkama* and developing his practice, one of the tigers would creep up and crouch down to watch Venerable Ajaan walking, without any fear of him at all. But it never did anything to him and it may have just wondered what he was up to, so it crept close to sniff and have a look. As soon as Venerable Ajaan Khao heard an unusual sound that he could not place he shone his flashlight there, to see a great tiger leap away, sometimes right close in front of him. Even after that he was able to go on walking *caṅkama* and doing his practice, without any fear or thoughts that the tiger would come back and jump on him, maul him and eat him. Because his faith in Dhamma was stronger than fear of the tiger, so he was able to persist and keep on doing his practice. Sometimes he would climb up the hillside in the evening from where he could see large herds of elephants which were going for a walk along a large area of rocky outcrop which stretched for miles. As it was not covered by forest he could see the elephants quite clearly, both large and small going out to search for food. He said that while watching this herd of elephants who were having fun teasing each other and playing together, he went on happily looking at them, quite absorbed until the late evening and it got too dark to see. For they liked to tease each other and play together in the same way as people do.

Venerable Ajaan Khao had a streak of very strong determination in his character, which may be seen from what we have written about him already. He had no difficulty in sitting in meditation practice all night and there was nothing that prevented him from doing so. For sitting in meditation practice from dusk to dawn is no small thing, and unless one is the kind of person who has a heart full of courageous determination, so firm that it seems as

106. Phu: Hill, Dong: Jungle, Ampher: District, and Baan: village.

if it could cut through a diamond, one cannot do it. So we should give him our heartfelt praise and admiration. It is in ways such as this that he is fully capable of being a teacher, an *Ācariya,* to his followers, enabling them to gain peace, ever since he started teaching, up to the present day. He has absolute certainty in himself that he has reached the end of becoming and birth, and this is completely self-evident to him, even though he is still "wearing" the five *khandhas.* When it reaches the time for him to let go of the *khandhas* he will be in the state of ultimate happiness *(Paramaṁ–Sukhaṁ)* in all respects and he will be totally free of all responsibilities and concerns.

This brief biography of one of the most important and outstanding of Venerable Ajaan Mun's followers, is now completed. Those who read this should think about it and try to reckon who this *Ācariya* is. At present he is still alive and he is revered by a large number of Bhikkhus, Novices and lay people, but I shall not disclose his name for fear that it may cause a lot of disturbance for him. For he has gone beyond all forms of worldly concerns entirely and is endowed with nothing but pure Dhamma — as well as his five *khandhas* which cause him trouble and disturbance all the time — and I have no doubts about him that he is anything other than what is portrayed here.[107]

May good fortune and blessings come to all of you who read this short biography of this most wonderful man. For as long as you do not fall back or give up your striving in the practice which leads to Dhamma, one day you will also praise the pure treasure of Dhamma — the refuge of your heart — even as this *Ācariya* does in his own heart. This is bound to be the case, which is in conformity with the Dhamma as being the treasure of everybody who practises in the "Right Way" *(Sāmīci–Kamma).*

107. This paragraph appeared in the original Thai version of this book. But as the *Ācariya* has since died, it no longer applies.

13

Methods of Bhāvanā

The Method of Walking Caṅkama

The Venerable Ajaan Mun who experienced Dhamma quite clearly in his heart practised in a consistent, even and elegant manner which can and should most certainly and wholeheartedly be called the "Middle Way of Practice" *(Majjhima Paṭipadā)* of a Bhikkhu in this present age. But I did not describe the method of walking *caṅkama* which he used when I wrote his biography. For I forgot to explain how he did it, whether he walked in any special direction or not, how long the path should be for walking *caṅkama,* and before starting to walk *caṅkama,* were there any preliminary practices which he used? Therefore we shall now make good this omission and explain all these things in this book so that those readers who are interested enough may take them as the basis of their practice in the future.

Truly speaking, Dhamma and *Vinaya* are the basic pattern of the "Middle Way of practice" for those who are interested enough to follow and practise them rightly and fully, and these are already available. Because of this, Venerable Ajaan Mun used to set them up as the guiding pattern for what he did in a faultless manner, both in his ordinary activities and in the various forms of meditation practice which he used. But we will explain his method of walking *caṅkama* before any others.

Firstly, the direction by the compass in which the *caṅkama* path is made and its length are as follows. Venerable Ajaan Mun determined that the direction of the *caṅkama* path should be east–west, but it may vary from this between Northeast–southwest to Southeast–northwest, although it should be made within these limits and he always maintained this practice. The length of the

path will depend on what is suitable. He did not give any fixed ruling on this and one must consider for oneself what is reasonable. Normally it should be about twenty paces long, although there is no fixed limit. He also said that it should not be less than ten paces long for those occasions when one cannot find any place longer and more suitable. Though generally speaking, a path of between twenty and thirty paces is most suitable. He made a special point of keeping to the limits of direction as mentioned above and always maintained this without deviating from it unless he had no other alternative, and he taught the Bhikkhus and Novices to practise in this way also.

Occasionally he would see a Bhikkhu walking *caṅkama* in the wrong direction and he would tell him off and teach him saying:

> "When I teach my followers, whether in the way of Dhamma or *Vinaya,* I always teach according to a regular pattern without deviating from it. Even in walking *caṅkama,* which is an aspect of Dhamma, there is a regular pattern of how it should be done which accords with Dhamma. When they walked *caṅkama* in the time of the Lord Buddha, did they specify in what direction they should walk, or not? I have found out that they specified three directions as I have often explained to you, and nobody should think that this is an insignificant thing, which you have no interest in practising and accepting. For this would show that you are only determined to train yourself in whatever interests you and everything else you will see as being insignificant — which is how it has been with you in the past — seeing nothing as significant! Being like this is a clear indication of the insignificance of yourself. For you came here originally with a full commitment to train yourself in the whole teaching. But when you leave this place you will be bound to take this view and habit of seeing everything as insignificant, along with you and to put it into practice. This will lead you to believe that there is nothing of any real significance within all those who practise the way of Dhamma — for even having come to stay with a Teacher, an *Ācariya* who you respect with faith, you still don't see any significance in his teaching and admonishment. This means that at some time you will be creating things that will lead on more and more to your own ruin."
>
> "It is just this thing, in those who come to follow my teaching, which makes me lack confidence in them and feel doubtful whether they will attain anything of ultimate truth *(sāra)* to act as a firm foundation for their

further practice in the future. All I can see is 'insignificance' everywhere in them! For the truth of the matter is that I have already investigated every aspect of the Dhamma which I give out to teach my followers. I have examined it and checked it over and over again until I am quite sure about it and I don't teach things which occur to me on the spur of the moment without having considered them properly beforehand as though they just, so to speak, slip out of my mouth. But everything I teach has been thoroughly investigated right through from its gross and obvious, right up to its most subtle aspects."

"In determining the directions which are appropriate for walking *caṅkama,* I have explained them many times to my followers until it has become tiresome both to the teacher and to those who listen. But why instead of accepting it as something to investigate and try out and prove by training yourself, do you stubbornly oppose it and then develop an attitude in which you are shameless in the face of your teacher and of the others who are living together here."

"In regard to doing research into the various compass directions and their suitability for striving in Dhamma in various ways, I have done this for a long time and have known about it for a long time, so I feel competent to teach my followers with complete certainty. So, when I see them going against what I have taught I can't help feeling disheartened and sorry and fearful that in the future I shall see nothing but falsehood everywhere in the monasteries and the S*āsana* throughout, including the Bhikkhus, Novices, Elders, Nuns and Buddhists generally, because self-will and doing these things the easy way will lead them into falsehood. It is not careful investigation and looking to see the ways of cause and effect that lead people into falsehood — for these things are what make the *Sāsana* true and blameless. But those people who practise in ways that turn the *Sāsana* into a tool of the *kilesas* which fill their hearts, is what brings blame on the *Sāsana.* It is just this that makes me afraid, because I can see it with my own eyes — such as in this case here and in this sort of thing."

I actually watched Venerable Ajaan call this Bhikkhu to tell him off and teach him in this forceful manner, and I can never forget it. So when the situation is right I bring it out and tell others about it. It is in this way that Venerable Ajaan Mun had his own particular way of walking *caṅkama,* a valid way based on his own researches as mentioned above.

The Direction For Walking Caṅkama As Defined by Venerable Ajaan Mun

In deciding on the direction for setting the path for walking *caṅkama,* Venerable Ajaan Mun decided to look into the way of the Aryan tradition at the time of the Lord Buddha. He found out that originally there was a standard way in which they did it, so from that time on he always followed that way. As to whether one should wear the *cīvara* (outer robe), he said that in walking *caṅkama* one may wear it, or not, depending on whatever is suitable and appropriate in the circumstances.

As for the direction in which one should site the path for walking *caṅkama;* the method of walking; wearing the *cīvara,* or not; or what one should do just before starting to walk while standing and pondering in one's heart at the end of the *caṅkama* path; in all these things, Venerable Ajaan Mun looked and found out how the Aryan tradition was practised in all of its subtlety and he set himself to practise it in the same way from then on. *Thus, in walking caṅkama he taught that one should walk parallel to the mean path which the sun takes throughout the day, or between the two limits from Northeast–southwest through east–west to Southeast–northwest.* He said that the line of the mean path of the sun is the best way, followed by the two deviations from this line. But as far as going beyond these limits, or walking on a north–south line, he was never seen to do this, and quite apart from seeing what he himself did, I in fact heard him say that one should not walk in these directions. But I have completely forgotten why this is so.

The Method of Walking Caṅkama Bhāvanā

The practice of walking back and forth which is called "walking *caṅkama bhāvanā*" should be done, neither too fast nor too slow, but in a harmonious, seemly manner, which accords with the tradition of the Bhikkhus who were striving to attain Dhamma by the way of walking at the time of the Lord Buddha. This was one of the methods of making a change from the sitting posture, called "sitting *bhāvanā*". A further change may be made by standing still, called "standing *bhāvanā*". Finally, a still further change may be made lying down called *"sīha seyyāsana bhāvanā"* in which a resolve has been made

to practise *bhāvanā* while lying down in the posture called *"Sīha Seyyāsana"* (The Lion–Posture).

Whichever of these methods are used, in striving to practise the way, the underlying purpose and intention is to clean out and wash away the *kilesas* in the same way and using the same methods in each of them without changing the "tools" — which means the Dhamma — that one has been using to do this job, and which suit one's temperament.

Before walking *caṅkama* one should decide on how long or short a distance one will walk and from where to where. One may then have to get the path cleared and prepared, making it as long as one wants, before one can walk on it conveniently.

In walking *caṅkama*, one should, to start with, go to one end of the place, or the prepared path where one will walk, put one's hands together and raise them to one's forehead in *pūjā.* Then one should recollect the virtue of the *Ti–Ratana* — the Buddha, Dhamma and *Sangha* — which one takes as the *Saraṇa* — the refuge which is firmly implanted in one's heart. Then one should recollect the virtue of one's Father and Mother, one's *Upajjhāya* (Preceptor), one's Teacher and all others who have been of value to oneself. Then one should reflect on the purpose of this practice which one is about to do, and how one should do it with determination to reach that purpose. After this one should put one's hands down in front of one, the right hand over the left, just below the level of the navel — as in the images of the Buddha which depict him in contemplation — and then one should promote the Four *Brahmavihāras.*[108] Having done this, one puts one's eyes down in a modest manner, sets up mindfulness to be aware of the *citta,* and that Dhamma which one usually uses as a preparatory method *(parikamma)* to control the heart; or else one investigates the various Dhammas which one has been doing in other situations (such as sitting).

Then one starts walking back and forth between the points which one has decided as the end limits of the *caṅkama* path. Walking in a controlled manner and being mindful of that Dhamma or that thing which one is investigating, the whole time, and not letting one's *citta* go away from this work which one is presently doing. One should not walk swinging one's arms, nor with one's arms behind one's back, or folded across one's chest, and one should not be looking about all over the place while walking — which is the way of someone who lacks self-control.

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108. See footnote 60 on page 136.

In standing still while fixing one's attention upon and pondering or investigating that Dhamma, there is no need to take up any special position on the *caṅkama* path and one may stop and stand wherever one wants to and for as long or short a time as one wishes. For it depends only upon the circumstances as to whether one should stop, or go on walking again. Because, pondering that Dhamma may be deep or shallow and gross or subtle in various different ways and one must be free to practise in whatever way is necessary until one has gained a clear understanding of it, after which one should go on walking as before. Sometimes it may be longer than one hour before one has become quite clear about it and can go on walking again.

When walking and keeping one's attention on a *parikamma,* or investigating Dhamma, one should not count one's steps — unless that is, one has taken up one's walking process as the basis *(ārammaṇa)* of one's practice, in which case one may count them if it helps.

Whatever form of practice one is doing, it is most important that mindfulness *(sati)* should be present continually with that practice. If mindfulness is lacking in whatever work one is doing, that work cannot be considered as striving in the way of Dhamma. Anyone who does the practice should have as much interest in being mindful as he does in the Dhamma which he is using as a *parikamma.* If mindfulness drops away, even though one may still be doing the *parikamma bhāvanā* which goes by habit, the resulting calm of heart which (one) intends to get, will not arise as one wants it to.

The length of time one spends in walking *caṅkama* one must determine for oneself and striving in the way of Dhamma may be done in any of the four postures — walking, standing, sitting or lying down — and one may find that any one of them is the most suitable for one's own characteristics, for different people have different characteristics. Using these four postures at different times is not only for quelling the *kilesas,* but also to enable one to change one's posture. Because, for the body-mind complex *(dhātu–khandha)* to be a useful "tool", one must look after it. One way of doing this is to change its posture from time to time, and this keeps it fit and suitable for use in doing this work. For if one does not look after it in various ways, the body-mind complex can become an enemy to its owner — in other words it changes and alters in various ways until finally one cannot reach the intended purpose for which one is working.

The *Dhutanga Bhikkhu* considers the practice of walking *caṅkama* as being a duty which is truly a fundamental part of his life and generally he will walk

an hour or more each time. After he has finished his meal in the morning he will start walking on his *caṅkama* path and finish about eleven or twelve o'clock, after which he will have a short rest. Between one and two o'clock in the afternoon he will again start walking *caṅkama* and go on until it is time to sweep the ground around where he is staying, and to have a wash. After this he will start walking again until seven or eight o'clock in the evening in the winter, but at other times he will go on until ten or eleven o'clock at night. Then he will return to his dwelling to practise *samādhi bhāvanā.*

This is typical, but however it may be, they are bound to walk *caṅkama* and sit in *samādhi bhāvanā* for long periods of time and to keep up this routine continually. Regardless of where they are staying, in whatever circumstances and in all seasons, they keep up their efforts to practise the way continually without letting it lapse. For to let it lapse would make them weak and let the *kilesas* rove about stirring up trouble and causing a lot of disturbance and vexation for their hearts; but instead, they keep on trying to chop up the *kilesas* in all situations. By practising in this way they see some results coming from their efforts; and as they go on, they continue to see results coming steadily all the time.

In the early stages, when the influence of the *kilesas* is still very strong, it is rather difficult and one is quite likely to be caught by them and made to give way and lie down and go to sleep without realising what is happening. By the time one has become conscious of oneself, the *kilesas* will have eaten up that which one has inside oneself until they are full. Then they are able to go on wandering all over the world through every continent before one drowsily wakes up and complains to oneself that one was carried away and dropped off to sleep for a few moments. "From now on I resolve to increase my efforts as hard as I can, but for today drowsiness and lethargy made me go wrong." In truth it was just his *kilesas* that made him go wrong, and the next time, he will still not look and see what they are like, and he will be caught again. But he is not afraid of them! It is unpleasant and hurts, but he is not afraid of them! And this is how the *kilesas* beat him and whip him.

Those who practise *bhāvanā* have all been chastened and reformed by the *kilesas* many times, and then complained that the *kilesas* are still too clever and that they were not yet able to catch up with them. This is just as it should be, for they have been the teacher, the *Ācariya,* of people and animals throughout the world since ages past.

To begin with, when one first starts trying to do the practice the *kilesas* become angry and try to force one to go this way and that. They try to make one lazy, to make one feel pains here and aches there, to make one feel sleepy and drowsy, and to make one go and look for all sorts of things to do, which cause a lot of trouble, so that one has little time for practising *bhāvanā;* or so that the *citta* is so restless that one cannot practise *bhāvanā.* Then they make one think that one has little merit and not much inherent ability, so that one is incapable of practising much and one cannot sit in *bhāvanā* for any length of time. They make one think and imagine how that:

> "If I spend too much time with my eyes closed in *bhāvanā,* won't it cause me a lot of trouble and difficulty? I won't be able to keep up with the world; I won't be able to make ends meet."

As if, before he even did any practice of *bhāvanā* he had millions, and that if he were to start doing any *bhāvanā,* this alone would swallow up all his wealth. If then he actually started to do some *bhāvanā,* would not the *kilesas* with large bellies and wide open mouths bigger than a giant, go and swallow the lot? Even when he is driven by the *kilesas* to think just this much, he feels irritable, painful, sore and stiff everywhere. Finally he gives way to them and they lead him to loiter off in the direction where he thinks there are no fierce giants, devils or *Māra.* But when he returns and checks to see how much he has got in his pocket, it has all been cleaned out. What took it he does not know. He makes no complaint for he does not yet know the thief who came and stole it, because his pocket is attached to him and he was not careless, nor did he leave it anywhere that a thief could get at it; it was just that he was cleaned out in the way that has happened before, which he is used to, without knowing anything about what happens and why. Next time he will try again and he will be cleaned out again without being able to catch the thief. This is the path that the *kilesas* take; they like to do things in a high handed way such as this which makes it difficult for anyone to catch them. Even the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* who have no valuable possessions can still be robbed by them — for they can steal the *samādhi citta* until they are devoid of *samādhi–vipassanā* (*samādhi*–wisdom). They have already experienced this, so they are quick to warn all their associates and followers who are Buddhists to be watchful of themselves when they first start to take an interest in the teaching and practice of Buddhism and are looking for *sīla,* for Dhamma and for *samādhi bhāvanā.* Afraid that the

kilesas will come and steal or drag them away right before their eyes so that (they) can then no longer make contact with them and will never have another chance to get close to them — as has happened to these Bhikkhus in the past. But if they have been forewarned they may be able to watch themselves and be careful and not lose everything of value in themselves uselessly without anything to act as a signal and give them a warning that the *kilesas* are gathering all their valuables together to set about using them up, so that they lose everything altogether.

Those who are just beginning to train themselves should decide for themselves what times they will walk *caṅkama.* But they should also decide to keep walking longer when the hordes of deceptive *kilesas* creep in to steal their possessions, so that they will still have some *bhāvanā* left. *When walking caṅkama one should set up mindfulness of the parikamma word (or object) so that they blend together as one thing and support one's efforts with sati–sampajañña (mindfulness and awareness), making the heart firmly fixed to that Dhamma which is the parikamma.* The *parikamma* may, for example, be "BUDDHO" so that one makes the *citta* know and remain firmly fixed to "BUDDHO" the whole time while walking back and forth. When we talk about that kind of striving, it means doing it without any breaks and pauses in between, which can happen even though one still thinks that one is practising with striving; the result will then be a state of calm and peace, as long as the *citta* does not forget itself and get involved in some other emotionally bound situation to which it is attached *(ārammaṇa)* before one gets there. One who does the practice of *bhāvanā* can for certain expect to be engulfed in happiness of heart at that time or at any other time when this happens.

But before doing any training you should understand and accept the following. The Lord Buddha and all those *Ācariyas* — Teachers — who teach the true way with *mettā,* to help people, do not teach untruth or falsehood to waste people's time which would certainly be useless. Before they had attained Dhamma which they used to teach other people they had to fall and scramble up with hardship and torment by themselves before we who are now doing the training came along. Therefore we should not be doubtful about them nor think that they were already "washed clean" and were just waiting to come out and teach without having previously made any investment of effort and hardship. The investment made by the Lord Buddha was such that he lost consciousness and fell over three times; and for his followers,

the *Sāvakas,* there were some who walked until their feet bled, or who went blind, and many other forms of hardship. But as a result of this they gained a refuge for their heart which is the highest, the ultimate, the most precious, the most exalted, the most wonderful, and beyond everything in the world, and this they gained as a reward and result of what they had lost. It was due to their intense and valiant effort that they were able to pass beyond the world, entirely free from all dangers and *dukkha,* and all of this was because of their readiness to renounce and let go of all those things that the world holds most dear. If they had remained deluded and jealously hung onto their possessions with anxious concern for *dukkha* and hardship, they would for sure still be immersed in *dukkha* and struggling in the mud and mire of the round of *saṁsāra (vaṭṭa),* like all the rest of us. Then there would be nobody in the world who was in a different state, and where could we find an example of striving that we should follow, and what method should we use to gain freedom from all those things that we ought not to desire, but which all of us have in profusion within us? We should train ourselves to think about and examine ourselves now, while we are still in this situation where we are capable of doing this. When we reach a situation where we are up against it with no way out and no way that we can wriggle free it is no longer possible to start making merit, giving *dāna,* guarding our moral behaviour and practising *samādhi bhāvanā* amongst the fuel and firewood of the funeral pyre — or in the maw of the crematorium. There is nothing left but the fire which does its duty and the body is turned to ashes and cinders. All of us have seen this sort of thing happening and it should make us feel sorrowful and should make a lasting impression on us.

Walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* are ways of analysing and searching for that which is real and essential *(sāraguṇa)* within oneself. This is very important work, with results that are beyond all one's expectations and far greater than any other work that one can do. So one should not let the *kilesas, taṇhā* and *avijjā* play about and deceive one into seeing it as work which tricks one into loss and ruin with no good results at all. For in truth it is the *kilesas* themselves which do just this — and they are what always lead people and other beings to destruction and ruin if they have been deceived by their tricks and methods until they no longer think about themselves. The analysis of the *citta* by means of *samādhi bhāvanā* means the analysis of oneself into the various parts of which one is composed so as to find out which is true and which is false, which leads one towards *dukkha* and which towards

sukha, which leads to hell and which to heaven, and which leads one towards *Nibbāna* — the final and complete end of all *dukkha.*

These important things which each and everyone of us will have to face up to, are not the business of the Lord Buddha, or of any of the *Sāvakas,* nor yet that of the Buddha *Sāsana* that it should be advertising them so as to get people to believe and have faith in them, so that they should be anxious and concerned about the results that may come from them. For these three Supreme Dhammas (i.e., Buddha, Dhamma, *Sangha*) are complete and perfect as they always have been, and there is not the least part of any of them which anybody or anything can diminish or spoil. That task therefore comes down to the task before each one of us who must face up to that which is important right there in front of one, and each one of us should search for the way to avoid and evade and escape from these *kilesas* with the utmost mindfulness, strength and ability that each of us is capable, so that we may get free from them bit by bit. We should not just sit or lie down idly waiting for all these fearful things without any thought or consideration for them at all — as if we were pigs just waiting for the day when we will be killed and chopped up, meanwhile contentedly nosing about in the chaff and bran-husk. Because they only think about their mouths and stomachs and nothing else. But there are enormous differences between human beings and animals who are incapable of rational and reflective thought. So we should certainly never let go of ourselves so that our bodies and minds become involved in behaviour that is the way of animals. For the minds of animals know nothing of things that have lasting value — the only things that suit them are garlic and onions!

In writing the foregoing, it is not my intention to blame and criticise all those good and reasonable people, by means of the Dhamma that I have expounded. But rather to help them to promote the development of their *citta* (or heart), bodily action and speech, which have been thrown down in the mud and mire by these loathsome filthy things *(kilesas)* that have usurped them and turned them to their own use — and have thus become the master butcher, chopping them up for food which they find delicious in their various ways. Also, to arouse mindfulness and wisdom in these people so that they may know what the nature of their present state is. Then to try by using these ways and methods, which should be enough to help them and to get them out

of danger from these things to some extent, so that they may rightly be called Buddhists. A good way for them to come to understand their present state is by training themselves in *samādhi bhāvanā.* For by this method they should come to understand their state more easily than any other way. Because this work takes place within themselves, it acts within themselves, and their thoughts about the ways of the world, of people and beings takes place directly within themselves. Right and wrong, good and evil, happiness and discontent are all there within themselves so that the more they ponder these things, the more they come to know about themselves. When they know themselves, they must also know about the discontent *(dukkha)* which is part and parcel of themselves. Then day by day the *citta,* or heart will become clearer and more apparent and its value will increase — much in the way that goods in the world can become more expensive and valuable.

Anybody who often trains himself to think and to interpret what he finds in himself will know how to evade and avoid *dukkha.* He will not then go about gathering it and accumulating it all the time as he has done in the past. As for seeing the danger in the *dukkha* which is within himself, the day will come when he will see it continually and he will have the way to evade and avoid this danger time after time, and he will steadily become more and more free from it.

In seeing *dukkha,* he will see it within himself every time it arises in him — and also, in overcoming *dukkha* he will know how he has overcome it in himself by the power of his *samādhi, sati* and *paññā.* As for the *dukkha* connected with life and death and what he will become in future lives, however many they may be that he will have to face up to, he is not concerned or anxious. Because the nature of all of them is collected within his experience in the *khandhas* which are before him right now and which have been taken in and known by this one heart which is at present training and correcting itself. But while he lives he will be peaceful and calm in heart, due to the value and virtue of Dhamma which he has within him; and when he dies he will have a state of happiness *(sugato)* to enjoy. This is the result which comes from doing *samādhi* and walking *caṅkama bhāvanā.* It can cause those who practise it to become cheerful and courageous, beyond what anyone would normally ever expect, so it is something which we should do for our own sakes. We should not be careless or indifferent to it which may turn out to be more dangerous to us than we ever expected.

In fixing the *citta* and setting up mindfulness while walking *caṅkama,* one should do so properly and well, which is the way it should be for the intention and purpose of searching for virtue. For walking *caṅkama bhāvanā* is the search for virtue which is a correct path, which is not at all blameworthy, and throughout the world the wisest sages all praise it. One should go on trying to make one's *citta* become calm in this way, until one succeeds, but one should not do it by merely going through the motions. Then one will come to see the excellence and wonder that belongs to oneself. This is the *citta* which has been covered and wrapped up by such worthless rubbish that one has had no interest in the *citta,* believing only that the one which is wrapped up in this rubbish is no more important than the worthless rubbish which surrounds it. This tends to lead us into delusion about these things until we forget to think about ourselves.

But the "Truth" and the renown of the "Buddha, Dhamma and *Sangha*" spread throughout the "Triple World", and all of it came just from the heart, which was both the cause of them and the wonderful result, as we have mentioned before. In other words, the heart which has gone away free from all this worthless rubbish is called the Buddha or the *Sangha* depending on who it is that we are talking about. But when the "person" has gone, there remains only "Dhamma" and nothing else. For there is nothing that remains that we can distinguish as the *"Citta"* or "The Lord Buddha", both of which are suppositional or relative *(sammuti)* conditions of the highest kind in these Three Worlds. There remains only what we call "Dhamma", and this word is also suppositional and of the highest. But it is necessary to retain these words as the basic symbols for those in the world who hope for Dhamma as their refuge, until they have got there and no longer need to hope for anything at all. What we call "Dhamma" and the "person" then know each other, and there is no room left for him to doubt, even though he may have never known it in the past. Because of this the word *"citta"* means the same thing for that person as it does for ourselves and for everyone throughout the world. But those things which make the *cittas* of people so different from one another in ways that are so incredibly varied that one cannot imagine or guess the whole of it in human society, are the *kilesas.* Because the environments in which people live which are many, and varied beyond description, enter into association and interact with them. Then the *citta* which is subjected to these things is covered by them and so mixed in with them that they are bound together as one. The *citta* then becomes entirely different and unrecognisable so that it is

almost impossible to know what the true characteristics of the *citta* are apart from all these things which obscure it and "wrap it up" entirely and make it indistinguishable from them and this also makes it impossible to prove what past births and lives the *citta* of any person has come from.

Those things which obscure it and "wrap it up" more than anything else, are all what are called *"kilesas",* or the refuse that has been thrown away by all those who are the most excellent *Ācariyas.* So those who endeavour to wash out and cure those things which are mentioned above and to get rid of them to some extent are sure to gain the reward of increased happiness to an extent that depends on the causes they have done in cleansing them away. If they have been "washed out" to the point where purity has been attained, that person will have reached the end of all *dukkha* of heart while he is still in the midst of his *khandhas*[109] which he is looking after. This refers to people such as the Lord Buddha and the *Arahants,* who became enlightened and attained Dhamma of which they partook and tasted, as they also did with the joy of freedom *(vimutti–sukha)* at the same moment; without its having any reference to the time or place at all. The only requirement was and still is, for the *kilesas,* the fundamental enemy of the *citta,* to be brought to an end, to be completely extinguished and got rid of — this is all that is required! So it follows that it is only the *kilesas* and nothing else that blocks the way to the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* and prevents the *citta* from reaching them, and there is no other thing, person or whatever else that has any power to block them. It is therefore necessary in teaching Dhamma to teach the way to get down to the *citta,* which is where all the *kilesas* congregate, by the practical application of Dhamma. This means the practice of *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā* which are the major factors in all forms of Dhamma concerned with curing and eliminating them.

WALKING MEDITATION IS ONE OF THE MANY WAYS TO MAKE THE KILESAS disperse from the heart, as are the many other methods, such as sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā.* One should therefore take an interest in training oneself in these ways, and start doing it from now on. This is like work which one does in the world for one's livelihood, and which provides one with stature in human society where it is respected. But the work of doing what is good and virtu-

109. See Appendix on page 569.

ous, such as walking *caṅkama,* which we have already explained, is the work of uplifting oneself both internally and externally. This work also uplifts one's fellow human beings in this world as well as animals, in accordance with the strength of virtue of the Bhikkhu or lay person to spread happiness about so that the world can receive it, more or less as the case may be. For example, each and every one of the Buddhas was able to spread the cool shade of peace throughout the Three Worlds to an enormous extent and nobody else can equal them in this. Each of the *Arahants* were also able to spread peace to the world to a large extent in place of the Buddhas and their abilities in this was much greater than that of ordinary people. However, there are also good and gentle people who are in positions of authority in the world and whose strength of virtuous characteristics are quite great, and they do many things to help and be of value to people in general. The people then esteem and respect them and exalt them as the highest, like their own fathers and mothers — and they love them in the same way as they do their own parents. The more there are of such good people, the more does it indicate a state of progress and development in that group or society.

The *Sāsana* (the Way of Buddhism) and those who teach Dhamma to help the world in various ways without thinking about or expecting any material reward or remuneration, are people who make others glad at heart. They are full of *mettā* as a state of dwelling in Dhamma *(Mettā–Vihāra–Dhamma)* and they are faithful to the people who look up to them and never get tired of them or feel that they have had enough. At all times the people also think of them and praise them with reverence as shining examples. Wherever they go they never do any harm to the world, but instead, go about helping others, making everybody so glad at heart at the same time. The *Sāsana* and those who give help to the world, the former by means of Dhamma and the latter by material aid, are like a doctor and nurse who have compassion and *mettā* — always dispensing medicine and looking after the diseases of their fellows whose lives depend on these medicines and the doctors. Even when they have been cured of their sicknesses their gratitude will never let them forget such kindness and virtue. This is the power of virtue which is independent of race, class or nationality and is something which all desire.

Virtue and the Sāsana are not therefore things which are old fashioned and out of date, as some people think nowadays despite the fact that they also want to rely on others with a longing for the *mettā* and generous kindness of all those

who are big-hearted. For the *Sāsana* is where good people are made, and the *Sāsana* is the field of all that is good and virtuous. If a person is not good and virtuous it is quite impossible for him to teach the way of the *Sāsana* to others in the world. *The basis of the Sāsana is the hearts of good people as an absolute minimum requirement.* Beyond that it reaches up to the hearts of those who have complete Dhamma purity and liberation throughout — such as the Great Teacher *(Sāsadā)* of the Buddha *Sāsana.* Where could we find anyone else so considerate and capable? Who else would be prepared to make a sacrifice for their fellows like the hearts of the founders of the *Sāsana* who brought forth Dhamma to teach the world? A complete sacrifice such as was made by all the Buddhas and the *Sāvaka Arahants* who followed each of the Buddhas who gave help to the people. If they had been people whose hearts were not perfectly clean and pure and free from all selfishness they would never have been able to sacrifice everything for the sake of the world.

This is something that is not difficult for me to accept and to have complete faith in, and even if nobody else accepted it I would still be prepared to go on being a fool who has faith in it. Because, each one of us has been born into this world and lived in it long enough to know the meanness and generosity, the selfishness and magnanimity of our fellow human beings, quite well enough — for all of us in our different ways live in the same world. Our sorrows and happiness, the ups and downs of life, are all linked together the whole time in a way that is quite inseparable, and it is impossible for us to be unaware of this fact that is there between each and all of us — we are bound to be aware of it. Those who are tired of their situation and hate each other, do so because of knowing about each other. Those who love each other, who are glad to be together and trust each other implicitly, do so because they know about each other.

The teaching of the *Sāsana* which each of the Great Teachers — the Buddhas — initiated, shook up the Universe. Because it roused up and encouraged the hearts of all beings, waking them out of their sleep in which they had been satisfied to live amongst the mass of *kilesas.* The Wheel of Dhamma *(Dhamma–Cakka)* woke them up, turning out the *Ariya Sacca,* the most noble and excellent truths. How then could the one who proclaimed these Truths not be known for what he truly was, and with what characteristics he was endowed when he proclaimed them? If he was not endowed with *mettā* of the highest quality flowing out to the world, I don't know how I could explain them to

the satisfaction of the reader. If the Lord Buddha and his followers had been like all of us who, if we search and look into ourselves, into our hearts, see nothing but meanness and selfishness so that we cannot get along with other people, the *Sāsana* and the Great Teacher *(Sāsadā)* would never have arisen. Nor would there have been any cause for the world to pay homage and reverence to them as the highest ideal. The fact is that the world is still the world and there are both good and evil people mixed together in it, and it is not devoid of wise people and sages arising from the human race. This is because it has been under the influence of the pure and clean hearts of those who are completely unselfish and who fear that there are others more worthy than themselves to bring up and pacify people with the Dhamma Teaching of the *Sāsana.* So there are still some good people in the world. One should not assume that it is easy to be born as a human being, and not easy to die. But there may be forms of birth in which birth is easy and death is also easy — and others in which birth may be difficult and death easy, like animals everywhere. This is because life exists by means of the elements *(dhātu)* and *khandhas* in all cases. As soon as the breath stops, their continuity ceases and this just means that a person or animal dies. What more can one say? Where can we find enough permanence and stability so that we can afford to be careless and self-forgetful, without thinking or learning enough about ourselves to act as good tendencies of character *(sugati–nissāya)* to lead us into the future?

The Method of Sitting in Samādhi Bhāvanā

We have discussed the method of walking *caṅkama* quite extensively, so now we will go on to explain the method of sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* in enough detail to act as a basis for those who are beginning to train themselves. For whatever type of work one takes up, it is bound to have a set of rules and instructions as to how it should be done, and this is also the case with the practice of *samādhi bhāvanā.*

It is taught that in doing the practice of *samādhi bhāvanā,* one should sit in the *"samādhi"* posture with one's legs crossed, as displayed in many Buddha images. The right leg should be placed on top of the left, and the hands placed in the lap, the right hand above the left — as in the *samādhi* posture. The body should be upright in a natural manner, neither bending forward or backwards

too much — nor should one incline to the right or left beyond what is normal and natural. No part of the body should be under abnormal pressure or tense — which would be using force and creating difficulties — for it should be relaxed in all its parts in a normal, natural manner.

But when you start to do the meditation practice, please keep your interest and attention on the meditation practice alone. You should not be anxious whether you are maintaining the correct *samādhi* posture that you started off with or whether it has changed in the meantime, leaning forwards or backwards, right or left too much. For all this would be concern for the body rather than for the *citta* and the *samādhi bhāvanā* will not go smoothly. Therefore, once one has started to do the *citta bhāvanā* one should have no further concern for the body, and one should set oneself to do the work of the *citta* from then on until one reaches the time for leaving the *samādhi bhāvanā.*

When one first begins doing citta bhāvanā one should establish awareness, which means the citta pays full attention to what one is doing, and this is what they call "being in the present" (Paccupanna–Dhamma). This is the way that one can come to know clearly whatever happens to the *citta* and the mental objects of emotional attachment *(Dhammārammaṇa)* of various kinds whether good or bad when they change and alter just at that time — rather than at other times. This means establishing the *citta* with full attention to what one is doing with mindfulness *(sati).* Mindfulness means that the heart has a state of fully conscious knowing[110] and this is what reminds and keeps one mindful that now is the time when one is beginning to do this work. Please be careful not to let the *citta* fly away towards emotional attachments *(ārammaṇa)* of various kinds, either past or future, good or evil, which are far away from the present work of doing the beginning or preparatory stages of *bhāvanā (parikamma–bhāvanā).*

How to Set Up Mindfulness Right Here and Now

The nature of the citta is just to know. It has no ability in itself to make decisions, to think or investigate. It just knows thought, knows reasoned thinking, knows peace and it just knows trouble and disturbances that comes from contact with various things — that is all. But it has no ability to discriminate, nor does it know how to consider and decide what is right and wrong or good and evil. In other words, it does not by itself know what is right and wrong or

110. "Ra–leuk roo yoo" (Thai): Literally means "recalling knowing".

good and evil. *Therefore it has to rely upon mindfulness and wisdom — that which knows and that which assesses, considers, directs and looks after it.* For mindfulness and wisdom have power over the *citta* and they are able to know about and see through the various emotional attachments *(ārammaṇa)* which the *citta* is thinking about. Therefore one should set up and establish mindfulness of the type which recollects and has power over that *citta* right before one, here and now. It will then do the duty of setting up knowledge and guarding the *citta,* not allowing it to slip away from the objective support of the *bhāvanā* and go to other things. If one can keep one's mindfulness in the present, guarding the *citta* the whole time in this way while doing the *bhāvanā,* one is sure to gain the asset of mindfulness with clear knowing *(sati–sampajañña),* at that time — or at some future time.

In doing *bhāvanā* with a preparatory method *(parikamma)* that is some aspect of Dhamma, one should do whichever type suits one's nature and not something which goes against the grain. At that time, one should take up whatever aspect of Dhamma feels right and harmonious to one's heart and go on doing it as one's *parikamma bhāvanā* from then on in the way that we have already explained.

How to Think the Parikamma Bhāvanā

In making the preparatory meditation *(parikamma–bhāvanā)*[111] as one's thinking, one may think of any aspect of Dhamma as it suits one, as we have mentioned above. Such as, repeating "Buddho, Dhammo, Sangho" three times and then continue by fixing in mind one of these Dhammas with mindfulness. But if one takes any aspect of Dhamma apart from the above three, one should repeat and recollect these three — "Buddho, Dhamma, Sangho", which are the "Three Jewels", three times before starting with that aspect of Dhamma. From then on one should gently turn to doing the preparatory aspect which one has decided upon — such as *ānāpānasati,*[112] or *aṭṭhi* (bones) or *taco* (skin) for example.

111. Using the verb "to think" in this sense is unconventional English; but it accurately follows the meaning of the original text.

112. Keeping attention on the feeling of the breath going in and out. The breath is usually felt at the nostrils.

The various types of *parikamma bhāvanā* which have been given to us to control the heart at that time — or at other times — act as a means of holding one's attention *(ārammaṇa)* for the heart to grasp hold of when one wants to become calm. For the nature of the heart is subtle, but it is not yet capable of depending on its own resources, which is due to the *citta* still not belonging entirely to itself in a way that is complete and immaculate, like the Lord Buddha and the *Arahants.* So it is necessary to have a word which is an aspect of Dhamma, to act as a *parikamma* to tie the heart down — or to act as an object of attachment for the heart, at that time.

In doing the *parikamma bhāvanā* with any aspect of Dhamma, one should not speculate or imagine what results should arise from it at that time. One may for example imagine that calm having such and such characteristics will arise at that time; or that various *"nimittas"*[113] will arise; or maybe that one will see heaven or hell in various grades or depths at that time. All such thoughts are just speculation or guesswork and they only cause agitation and disturbance, preventing the heart from getting calm. There is no value at all in such imaginings, and they may make the heart feel like giving up the practice, or make it afraid to go on in various ways, all of which is contrary to the purpose of the right way of *bhāvanā* as taught by the Lord.

The right way is to set up the *citta* with constant mindfulness here and now in the present with the *parikamma* as the only object of attachment of the heart. This is done by getting the heart to be continually mindful of the *parikamma* word, such as "Buddho, Buddho..." This must go on all the time while being mindful and making the effort to feel or appreciate that *parikamma.* But do not let the *citta* wander and become fascinated by other objects of attachment and go after them.

The more the *citta,* mindfulness and the *parikamma* word support each other and become closely involved together, the more does it approach the aim and purpose of the *bhāvanā.* The resulting calm and peace, or other things of a strange and unusual character which one has never met or seen before will then appear as they accord with one's inherent tendencies of character. This will make one truly amazed at that time. They will arise on their own because of the power and influence of guarding the *citta* continually with the *parikamma* word and mindfulness. There is nothing else that can conjure them up.

113. See footnote number 65 page 154.

Concerning the Need to Watch and be Careful While Doing Bhāvanā

There is in general a tendency for people to think and talk of *bhāvanā* as being that in which one sees the heavens and hells as well as the *kamma* and fortune of oneself and others. Those of you who are truly intent on Dhamma and its meaning for yourselves should consider this point and look to see whether, during the time that you practise *bhāvanā,* your *citta* does have any lingering desire to become involved in these things, or not. If it does, you should be careful not to give them any chance to arise — that is, if your intention in doing *bhāvanā* is to gain calm and peace and to see results in terms of happiness of heart, which is truly the right way. Because those things (the heavens, etc.) are not good things, as is generally supposed, but they are thoughts that are beginning to go in the wrong direction. *For the citta is that which is able to submit to thinking about acquiring various things which one likes, even though they may be false and illusory. It may then happen after a long time of submitting to such thoughts, that they arise and appear to one as an image, seeming as if, they were true and real.* This state is difficult to correct and cure. For if a person has wanted to go in that direction and does so until those things which he understands to exist in that way appear to him, he believes that they are true, and he feels glad about them. This then makes him more and more firmly attached to what he has been doing until there is no way for him to get free — and he is not likely to listen to any advice from anybody. I have brought this to you, the reader's notice, so that you who intend to do the practice of *bhāvanā* may know about it, and so that you should be aware and keep watch on your *citta* and not let it think about such things or submit to going in that direction. Otherwise one may become a meditation practitioner who is a revolting and pitiable caricature while still arrogantly maintaining that one's knowledge and experience is right and true. And at the same time teaching others to go in that same direction as one has oneself gone.

If the *citta* has thought about and accepted something, even though that thing is quite wrong, it will believe that thing to be correct. Therefore it is very difficult and disheartening and no small thing to correct such a state. Because the *citta* is by nature very subtle and it is hard to know, amongst all the objects and obsessions *(ārammaṇa)* which the *citta* has gone in for and got hooked onto, which of them are good and which evil. In fact it is only possible for those who are extremely skilled in the ways of *bhāvanā* and who have gone

through many and varied experiences so that they have gained a very wide understanding of them — such as Venerable Ajaan Mun. Whenever anything went wrong with himself and he had trouble in any way, whether externally or internally, he would unravel and look into the problem in detail until no room was left for any remaining doubt about it — which is why he was so rightly and appropriately called an *Ācariya* or teacher of the highest level in teaching *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhamma* to his followers.

Whenever anyone, who had some knowledge and experience in *bhāvanā* both externally and internally, came to Venerable Ajaan Mun and related his own story to him, we would all, as soon as he had finished, hear the Venerable Ajaan explain and display his own knowledge and experience as it was relevant, with concentrated intensity and certainty in a way that went straight to one's heart. What he said cleared up all doubts, both in the one who was talking to him and all the rest of us who had quietly gathered to listen. It also produced a great joy in the Dhamma that Venerable Ajaan taught, which was beyond description.

If the questioner still had any doubts in any direction, once Venerable Ajaan had finished, he would then turn to these problems and explain his own knowledge, thought and experience for Venerable Ajaan to consider once again. Venerable Ajaan would then point out immediately what were the reasons for those problems with the complete certainty of one who has already gone through them himself. He would often say to some of them such things as:

> "Why do you wallow about in piss and shit?[114] I used to do this at one time long before you and I washed myself clean of them with various cleansing agents for three days before I could get rid of the stink. But you are still energetically indulging in those things, wallowing in them from head to feet while believing that they are a pleasant perfume — isn't that so? All of it is just a pile of shit and piss two or three days old, which is radiating a pervasive stink pungent and penetrating, yet you are daring enough to make out that you can inhale it for fun. All the water in the well will hardly be enough to get rid of the stench from those things which you think smell so good. Don't say I haven't warned you! I have smelt these same things in the past, so I am afraid of them and make haste to warn you for fear that you will be induced into it again. If you have no water to wash it away it may

114. This is a graphic way of referring to the world in which the *kilesas* of greed, hatred and delusion have the upper hand.

be even worse for you than it was for me. But even though I had water to wash with, it was still unpleasant and I'm still afraid of it right up to the present day."

When Venerable Ajaan spoke in this way he used words which were most spirited and pithy — or so it seemed to the writer who has a rather rough character. For people with more refined characters they may seem distasteful and unpleasant to listen to. But what he told us in that way were words which have remained firmly entrenched and precise, concerning what is the wrong way and the right way which he himself had gone by in the past, and which he gave us who had come to learn from him to free ourselves from doubt and uncertainty in those things which we still thought of as right and good. It also made us try to follow him so that we would be quite sure that we would not be "covered by a mass of piss and shit" any more — which is far worse than the words which he used to point it out to us and to make us listen, which some may think of as being coarse and vulgar.

I have included a bit of Venerable Ajaan's Dhamma here, for all those of you who are training yourselves, for you to think about how this knowledge which comes by way of *bhāvanā* is not final and complete in anyone who only insists on it being so without having investigated for themselves and checked it out, or having asked those who already know about it. The only exceptions are those who are already adept and fully developed, and they are not to be classed amongst those who see only the piss and shit and say how good it is, for the adepts have already disapproved of it and they delight in their own knowledge and understanding.

I also used to be proud of my insignificant cleverness and used to argue with Venerable Ajaan forcibly until my eyes were red, so often I cannot remember how many times, for I was continually doing so. Knowledge used to arise in my mind all the time and I always felt quite sure that I was completely right. But in arguing with him, every sentence which I thought was right and true became like a stick which I handed to Venerable *Ācariya* for him to beat me over the head with, until I hardly had any hair left.[115] But then I used to gain skill, penetrating insights and great benefit from these bamboo sprig[116] questions (questions which kill "Self") that I asked and thought were so right and good wherever they came from. This is how Venerable Ajaan taught me.

115. The beating is, of course, not physical.

116. The twigs that grow out of the stem of an old bamboo which signify that it will not last long.

But sometimes, after he had beaten me with skill, he would give some soothing balm for me to put on my wounds. How else could I derive any benefit from my insignificant cleverness? In saying that: "Venerable Ajaan gave some balm for me to put on my own wounds" — this means that he corrected my understanding and knowledge which had come from my *bhāvanā* and which I had interpreted wrongly. I always accepted Venerable Ajaan's teaching, but before doing so and agreeing with his reasoning I had to be hit until it hurt and I became afraid, which is what I call, being beaten!

I have included some of my own experiences here to show how those who have gone through it all and know the way are very different from other people who are still deluded and immersed in hordes of *kilesas.* If someone who does not know, comes to cure those wrong views and understandings and it is left up to just those who have some slick cleverness to do this, the situation is bound to turn into a verbal boxing ring in which nobody can reach any agreement and nobody else is likely to buy a ticket to go and listen to them for fear that they may tread in the spittle of the contestants in their verbal boxing match, and slip up and slide into it themselves without getting any good results or benefit from it at all.

The reason for this is because the internal knowledge derived from *bhāvanā* is very changeable and complex and it is difficult to decide what is right and what wrong. Those who do the practice without having a true Teacher *(Ācariya)* available to train and teach them are bound to grope about in the dark grabbing at what is right or wrong quite haphazardly. They grasp haphazardly at everything, and, using the simile of a tree, they grasp the hardwood, the softwood, the branches, twigs and leaves; and they build a house, a dwelling place for the *citta* in the province of the heart, but without having first trimmed off the leaves, the twigs and branches. Then they admire their work, thinking how elegant it is, even though other people cannot bear to look at it. The practice of *bhāvanā* which is other than insight wisdom with investigation *(vicāraṇā–ñāṇa)* is just like this. For whatever happens will be entirely accepted as completely right; and then they talk about it, and it pours out of their mouths in a torrent for others to hear. But with their own ears so close to their mouths they never listen to what they are saying, nor consider whether what they say is right or wrong. They just think that all of it is right and talk incessantly. The harm that comes from this not only stains themselves — who have not investigated, examined and realised what is appropriate and what should not be said — but

it also stains and distorts Buddhism, which is the focal point of it. Therefore we should always be very watchful and careful about this.

The Right Way to be "Thinking the Word" of the Parikamma Bhāvanā

Those who practise *bhāvanā* should keep their attention and interest entirely on their *parikamma* word while sitting in the practice of *parikamma bhāvanā.* They should not be concerned about the way they are sitting after they have initially set their sitting posture correctly. For while they are doing their meditation practice, defining and paying close attention to whatever practice they are doing, the body may lean forward or backwards, to the right or to the left to some extent, because at that time they have lost all interest in the body and their interest is entirely focused on the practice. So even if the body does lean a bit this way or that, the *citta* should not lean away from the support *(ārammaṇa)* of the *bhāvanā* — this is the way to succeed well. Because the goal which they are truly aiming for is to be found in the *bhāvanā.* But if the *citta* is anxious about the body all the time, afraid that it is leaning this way or that, the attention of the *citta* will be diverted from the *parikamma bhāvanā* word. Then it is not likely to become as subtle as it should, in accordance with the ability of each individual's *citta.* They will then not be able to get the *citta* to do its duty up to the maximum of which each individual is capable at that time.

Therefore they should not be concerned with the body externally. But they should instead be attending closely to the *bhāvanā* word alone, until the *citta* becomes calm and is able to know all the causes and results concerning oneself which are relevant to the main purpose of what one is doing.

Furthermore, when the *citta* becomes calm, concentrates together and goes down into *"bhavaṅga"* (where one reaches a state of complete rest without any sense of anything external such as the body), and then withdraws and rises out of it, and one sees that the body has leaned over this way or that in various positions, one should not feel any doubt or concern about the body not being straight and upright as one has set it up before starting. For concern about the body and about the heart will not only create disturbance for the *citta* which does not yet know what its duty should be, but the results which one should get at that time will not appear and all that one will be left with

is trouble between the body and heart when one does *bhāvanā,* without being aware of it. Therefore one should keep this in mind from the time when one starts to do *bhāvanā.*

Establishing the Location and Level of the Ārammaṇa of the Citta

Some types of *kammaṭṭhāna*[117] which are objects *(ārammaṇa)* of the *citta* have their own distinct location — such as, "hair of the head and of the body, nails, teeth," each has its own particular location. But the "location" for "skin", is just those parts of it which are taken as the object and one will know where they are located. One should realise that those objects which one defines do in fact exist and they are the objects of *kammaṭṭhāna,* each in its own place. These things whether high up or low down in the body, each have their own invariable location; thus, for example "teeth", are located in the mouth, hair of the head is located on top of the head — in a high location. Other parts such as skin, hair of the body, sinews and bones are distributed throughout the body and it is up to the one who practises to take up and decide upon one of the parts and where it is located, as the object of *kammaṭṭhāna.*

When one has decided on one of the parts as the object and its location, which is high or low or however it may be, one should take note of its location. But when one comes to define any one of the parts, such as those we have mentioned above, as the object, while doing the *bhāvanā,* one should just define that part alone and this is far more important than whether it is high or low — in the same way as the leaning of the body one way or another is not important when sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā.* So the level of the part whether high or low which we at first took note of is now left to whatever it maybe in its own nature; and one should not keep on bringing up those aspects of *kammaṭṭhāna* which have already been clearly defined because one thinks that they have altered from what they were originally. If one keeps bringing them up to re-establish them as the heart thinks they should be, it will just cause anxiety with regard to its location and it is not a form of *kammaṭṭhāna* which can be satisfactorily used to establish the *bhāvanā.* For example, if one decides

117. Here, the word "*kammaṭṭhāna*" is being used in its technical sense as objects (or subjects) of meditation practice, and they are *ārammaṇas* in that they are "supporting" conditions of one's meditation; such as, the Buddha (Buddho) or the breath in *ānāpānasati*, or part of the body in *kāyagaṭasati*, etc...

to consider the bones of the skull and one focuses one's attention on them as the object until one sees a clear image of them — as if one were looking at them with one's eyes. But then a thought arises that the skull bones have moved from their original high position and gone low down — which is not its true position. So one sets it up correctly and starts again. This builds up support for doubt and uncertainty in the heart all the time and one never has enough time to examine that part of the body to become acquainted with it.

The right way is to define that part of the body as feeling, or as a visualisation of that part, with mindful awareness throughout. Even if the image of that part should change its characteristics, growing larger, or smaller, or breaking up and disappearing, one should define it and know it however it may appear without any thought of it being higher or lower — which one determined at the beginning. Doing it this way will make the *citta* become intimately acquainted with that part of the body and also cause a feeling of sorrow and disenchantment with this part which one examined and which displayed its transient changing nature which was so forcefully apparent.

Defining one's breath and that location where one establishes awareness of it is done in much the same way. When at first one fixes one's attention on the breath, one fixes it at a suitable location such as the tip of the nose, and after a while one becomes engrossed in watching the breath with interest and then a doubt may arise, for the breath (or the place where it is being watched) may move away from the tip of the nose and go to some other location. So one brings it back and fixes it at the tip of the nose again — and this just creates a lot of trouble for oneself with one's own ideas, and it will never bring good results. Because doubt gets hold of them and spoils everything.

To go the right way about it and to be free from all doubt and anxiety about the location where one should watch the breath, one should do the practice in much the same way as we have described above for the other parts of the body. In other words, one should know the whole breath, which passes by going in or out, quite clearly, with mindfulness present the whole time until it reaches the end point of the breath. Then if the place where the breath is being felt should appear to be high or low, or different from the place which one thinks of as the starting point, it will not spoil the work of fixing one's attention on the breath in any way at all. In fact it will make the *citta* and the breath become intimately close together throughout until the end of the *bhāvanā* — or the end of the breath.

The Breath Ceases As Far As One's Feeling of It Goes

This sometimes happens while doing the practice of *ānāpānasati.* The limit of breathing is its cessation. The limit of the heart is that it goes down into an intimately concentrated state, ending its responsibility with the breath and setting itself up as the one *citta (eka–citta);* in other words, there is only one support *(ārammaṇa)* which is that of "knowing" which does not associate with anything else at all. This is known as the *citta* which has become intimately concentrated in *samādhi bhāvanā.*

But generally, those who practise *ānāpānasati* and who reach the point where the breath becomes subtle and appears to cease become apprehensive and think quite wrongly that: "If my breath stops I shall die!" Just this is enough to bring the breath back again and it becomes coarse breathing, as it was to begin with. Then the *citta* is also coarse, and finally the *bhāvanā* does not get anywhere much. It is probable that all they will get to is a fear of death and then the *citta* and the breath draw back until they find a state where they believe that they will not die — that's all! There are many cases of people doing *bhāvanā* like this amongst those who practise, so it is appropriate to give this warning. For it may happen to some of you who read this and who practise *ānāpānasati bhāvanā* who may have been or would otherwise have been deceived by this trick.

In doing *bhāvanā* to see the truth of what happens with the breath in *ānāpānasati,* you should define the breath with mindfulness, and go on until you reach the limit of breathing and of the *citta.* You will then see what is most wonderful, quite clearly, as soon as you pass by the fear of dying with courage and resolve, when it seems that your breathing has stopped. For when you are developing *ānāpānasati* and the breath becomes very fine and apparently ceases, as far as you can tell by feeling, you must understand that even if the breath in fact does cease, while your awareness, which is the heart, is still alive in this body, you most certainly will not die, however it may be.

If the breath stops, let it stop; and if anything else in the body stops with the breath, let it stop also, as it will, naturally. As for the heart, the one that does not cease nor die away when the other things do, it will discriminately look at and know everything of all kinds that comes within its fields of sense awareness at that time. But it will not be anxious or concerned about any natural conditions *(sabhāva),* that are arising and ceasing all the time. Just this

is all that is necessary for the *citta* to cut off all fear, concern and anxiety of all sorts which have been accumulated and stored up, and it does this in a way that one would never have expected or imagined to be possible. In addition this brings a state of calm which goes down and reaches the level of *samādhi* without anything being able to obstruct it at all. When the breath is about to cease, or when it actually ceases, the only thing which is likely to obstruct it is the fear of death, that's all. When this obstacle has been overcome just once, by the methods we have outlined above, this fear will disappear entirely and it will probably never again return to deceive one. Then one will be able to see some of the cunning tricks of the *kilesas* quite clearly. At that time one will also see that one does not die, as one thought one would, and this makes one see the nature of *Māra* so clearly and the way it creates endless imaginary ideas to deceive us.

Therefore, those of you who practise the way of *ānāpānasati* should remember what the "face" of *Māra* looks like when you meet it, and keep it well in mind. So that when you meet it again you will know how to evade and avoid it, how to correct and cure it and to go onwards smoothly until you reach the "far shore of safety", free from all *dukkha.* Like our Great Teacher who walked before us using this practice as the basis until he attained Enlightenment and *Nibbāna* by this method.

Bhavaṅga Citta

When they talk about the *citta* "dropping into *bhavaṅga*", some of you who read this may not understand what it means. Therefore it is necessary for us to give some explanation of it to start with.

The word *"bhavaṅga",* as understood by those who practise in the forests is given a meaning which comes from their experience and skills which I shall interpret as meaning: *"The state of existence".*[118] Or, one may call it the "house where *avijjā* dwells and rests", as it has done for countless ages past. When we say that the *citta* falls into *bhavaṅga* it means that *avijjā* gathers itself together and enters into this one place where it does no work. Nor does it send its servant out wandering and searching in its realm via the various pathways.

118. *"Aṅga* of *Bhava". Aṅga:* A constituent part or quality. *Bhava:* state or realm of existence. The word *"bhavaṅga"* is a technical term concerned with the experiences and the derived psychology of those who are skilled in meditation practice.

The pathways of *avijjā,* by which it goes out and in, are: the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the body; and, the realm of *avijjā* is made up of the innumerable visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes and things which contact the body. All these are what *avijjā* likes and enjoys. The servant of *avijjā* is *rāga–taṇhā,*[119] which depends for its activity on memory *(saññā),* thought forms *(sankhāra),* and consciousness *(viññāṇa).* These are the tools which help it in various ways to arrange things so that it gets what it wants.

When the *citta* drops into *bhavaṅga* due to the power of *samādhi, avijjā* stops and rests from its activities for a short while. But as soon as the *citta* rises up out of *samādhi,* it begins to do its work again as accords with its nature — although not as strongly as it did before its legs and arms were broken by the practice of *samādhi bhāvanā.* Therefore, *samādhi bhāvanā* is an excellent tool for weakening *avijjā,* so that wisdom *(paññā)* can then gradually sweep it away, until finally there is no more *avijjā* left in the heart.

One will begin to know the meaning of *"bhavaṅga citta"* from one's practice of *bhāvanā* when the *citta* concentrates itself together and goes down into a state of calm. Withdrawing from this state is known as "the *citta* coming out of *bhavaṅga*", and then it starts to get involved with all sorts of things under the commands of *avijjā* which are limitless and endless. For there is no other kind of work which goes on and on for so long, until it becomes quite impossible to unravel it and see the reason for it or any end to it, such as the work of *avijjā* which spreads and grows out and out everywhere through every village, every district and country, throughout the whole world and beyond into the whole of *saṁsāra.* Regardless of the cost of its work it is determined to go on with it. Love and hate, discord and anger are its work which it never gets tired of doing. It is satisfied to go on loving and hating, loathing and getting angry however much pain and trouble it causes to the one who acts as its servant. *Avijjā* is never ready to withdraw. In fact it goads its servant on to love, to hate and to promote discord and anger until the servant who has to accept the results of all this is completely ruined by it. But even then *avijjā* is not likely to have any sympathy, for it keeps driving its servant on, until he is completely destroyed by it. This is the nature of *avijjā* and it is always like this in the hearts of all beings in the world — for the task which *avijjā* sets them to do is never finished or completed, unlike other kinds of work. In fact it tends to keep on spreading out and increasing more and more, without any limit in time or any boundary.

119. *Rāga–taṇhā:* Sexual craving.

Those who have Dhamma in their hearts — such as those who have some *samādhi* and wisdom — can see something of the baneful destructive nature of *avijjā* which leads them to do its endless work. For when the *citta* becomes concentrated together and goes down to *bhavaṅga* where, as they say, *avijjā* stops its work for the time being, happiness and contentment become manifest and all cares and anxieties also stop when *avijjā* stops. When the *citta* stops doing work in this way, it can see something of the baneful destructiveness of the agitation and turbulence which is within it and which has *avijjā* behind it. For this agitation and turbulence are in marked contrast to the state when the *citta* is dwelling in *bhavaṅga.* Then after the *citta* has just withdrawn from *bhavaṅga,* it remains calm and peaceful for some time due to the protective and supportive influence of *samādhi,* and the more deeply it has attained calm, due to *samādhi,* the more will it see the baneful destructiveness of the agitation and turbulence caused by *avijjā.*

Therefore, those who practise *samādhi* are likely to become addicted to it and to lose all interest in curing and correcting it by any means, because this state is so calm and peaceful that it is easy to become addicted to it. In the end, although the *citta* gets to see the baneful destructiveness of the agitation which is due to *avijjā,* it also becomes addicted to *samādhi,* which is nothing but the home of *avijjā,* where it has always rested and slept — but the *citta* cannot see any better way out than this. It is just here that those who practise will come to see the value of mindfulness and wisdom in a heartfelt way. For they come to see that part of the practice which involves striving to extract and destroy this *avijjā.* Because apart from mindfulness and wisdom there is nothing that can destroy *avijjā.*

When Does the Bhavaṅga Citta Disappear?

Bhavaṅga citta will never disappear on its own, because it is the builder of the world and birth and the builder of the *kilesas* and *taṇhā* (craving), since ages past. It is also the path along which *avijjā* goes, which means the building or creating of the world and birth on the hearts of all beings everywhere in the world without ever becoming tired of it or satisfied with what it has done.

If one who practises, loves and cherishes *bhavaṅga citta* and loves the basis of his *samādhi* without thinking of looking for a way to change his position

towards that of developing wisdom so as to look at and examine *avijjā* itself it will be as if a wanton woman is there within the *citta* — or rather, in the *bhavaṅga citta* in *samādhi,* and it will be as though he is the agent of becoming and birth all the time and will never be able to get free.

If he wants to get free, he must build up mindfulness and wisdom within his heart until they are skilful, resolute, and fully capable of destroying *bhavaṅga citta* — the essence of birth and life in *saṁsāra.* After which *bhavaṅga citta* will dissolve and disappear on its own.

To be able to get to know *Bhavaṅga citta*, one must have firm and strong *samādhi*, as well as mindfulness and wisdom which are so sharp and penetrating that they come within the field of *Mahā Sati* and *Mahā Paññā*. Otherwise one cannot come to know it even though one learns the whole *Ti–Piṭaka* — and then one cannot get free from having to carry about a belly full of knowledge about *avijjā* all the time. The very best things to cure this are in fact *Mahā Sati* and *Mahā Paññā.* These are the weapons with which to destroy *bhavaṅga citta* and *bhavaṅga avijjā.*

We forest Bhikkhus write naturally according to our "forest natures". Please don't be offended or take it too seriously, because when we speak or write we don't have any fixed plan or pattern to refer to and to act as a guarantee of what we say. For when we practise, we practise in the forest, and when we learn, we learn in the forest, so our Dhamma is Forest Dhamma. In short, it is all the story of this forest and there are no text books or scriptures hidden in it at all.

In describing the methods of walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi,* we have not followed any progressive, step by step explanation. This is due to the way in which the various branches of Dhamma are linked together and it is necessary to explain how one thing leads on to another. This has led us to go round and round and back and forth wherever it was necessary to do so. But those readers who are newly beginning to train themselves may have some questions, and they may have been somewhat put out by this way of explaining, although it is also likely to be of value to them in the future. Therefore we will summarise these two methods of *bhāvanā* as follows.

If one finds that walking *caṅkama* suits one's temperament and that one gains calm or various skilful means *(upāya)* from it more than one gains from sitting in *samādhi,* one should do the walking practice more than sitting. Conversely, if one gains more results from sitting in *samādhi* than from walk-

ing, one should do more of the sitting practice. But one should not oppose the need to change one's posture at times, which is an important and necessary thing for the body — the tool which we must use in doing this work.

Either of these two are suitable for destroying the *"kilesas",* the things which store up the whole potential for existence and birth and all *dukkha* within the heart. So you ought to take an interest in the *citta* which is such an important thing even in the world. Then the world and oneself can live together in happiness, rather then living with discontent and trouble. For when the *citta* has had enough training, one has that which will protect and enable one to avoid trouble to some extent which is far better than having nothing within oneself at all. In addition, when the time comes for the *khandhas* to break up (death), one will be able to depend on the refuge of the overshadowing virtue within oneself, which one has steadily accumulated.

Beings in the world keep going on due to their *kamma,* some of which is good and some bad, and they experience results of it, some as happiness, some as discontent and suffering and this goes on all the time. Never has there been anyone or any being of any kind that has been able to evade and avoid experiencing those results which they do not want. Here in this world of people it is quite easy for us to know and see this at any time, both in ourselves and others, and also in animals who have some happiness and some suffering which they meet with from time to time, depending on circumstances in each case.

Training in what is right and good, which basically means *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā,* is for the purpose of developing them as a home and a sanctuary for the heart. This is something which those who practise the way should come to experience in the present, today or at least in this life for sure, in the same way as they did in the time of the Lord Buddha.

As for the experiences of the *citta* which becomes concentrated and goes down into *samādhi,* of which there are many different varieties according to different people's characteristics, we will say nothing about this. For we are afraid that you who are just beginning to do the practice will think and speculate about it in various ways that are quite false and nothing like the real thing which comes of itself from your own *samādhi* characteristics.

The explanations which we have given for the practices of walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* are generalised and suitable for those who are ordained as well as lay people, to start doing them. As for the results, which means the kind of *citta* that comes from doing these forms of practice, mainly

it will be calm. For when it has become concentrated and gone down and attained *samādhi*, the *citta* will be unified with its object of attention *(ārammaṇa)* and they are one and the same.[120] But in a few cases it may go in a different way, depending on the individual's characteristics. Therefore, those who practise, should not be worried when they hear from their friends that their *citta's* went like this, came to know and see that and experienced various *nimittas* in this way or that way. The thing you should keep in mind is the main purpose of what you are doing — which is to attain calm when the *citta* goes down into a concentrated state — and this is what matters. This is the result which always guarantees the *samādhi* as being genuine.

You who have energy and who are striving to practise the way are bound to see the wonder of the *citta* from *samādhi bhāvanā* one day for sure, and this is regardless of whether you are ordained or a faithful lay follower. That which you have read about the lives of the *Ariya–Sāvakas*[121] will then become your own story one day when you succeed in doing it.

Those things which are *kilesas* and evil *kamma,* as well as the Dhamma which cures them, are all there in all of us, and they are completely impartial — being no respecter of persons — nowadays, just as they were in ancient times. Because of this, one who practises, doing it in the proper way *(sāmīci–kamma),* in the methods of *samādhi* will get results which are truly satisfying, in the same way as the *Ariya–Sāvakas* did at the time of the Lord Buddha — and you should be able to attain the same thing also. But it is important not to pay more attention to speculating about the time and place that the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* will arise then in doing the practice on the Path *(Magga),* following the right way of Dhamma. This is the way and the means of shedding all the *kilesas* and the whole load of *dukkha* from one's heart. And this path is the Dhamma which has been continually overcoming *kilesas* directly and continually, ever since the time of the Lord Buddha up to the present without any change or alteration at all. Please take it and use it to cure your *citta,* which is where all the *kilesas* arise and dwell. This will lead you to see quite clearly in your heart how it has changed from having been a vessel full of *kilesas* into a vessel of Dhamma, gradually and steadily, until the whole heart becomes Dhamma.

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120. For example, in the practice of *ānāpānasati,* when *samādhi* is attained there is just "breath" going in and out. Even the supposed "self", doing the practice is absorbed into the "breath"; and "breath" is all that is known at that moment.

121. Generally this means the direct followers of the Buddha like Mahā Sāriputta.

Once the whole heart has become Dhamma one can live anywhere, and the arising of *dukkha* in the heart will no longer come one's way — except within the elements *(dhātu)* and the *khandhas* which are the "house of *dukkha*", which is still standing. But the *khandhas* are just *khandhas* and their *dukkha* just *dukkha* as they were before, and this will go on until they reach the day of their dissolution. Then the end of the repeated rounds of lives of *khandhas* and *dukkha* will have been resolved. That which is called *"avijjā"* which has been the prosperous chieftain over the heart will have lost all his power and be rendered meaningless as soon as the *citta* becomes entirely Dhamma throughout and it is at this point that the work of Dhamma comes to a final conclusion and one can go free. This is not like the work of *avijjā* which spreads and scatters out throughout the whole of the realm of *saṁsāra* without limit and never ending. This leads us to compare those two types of work and their results, the one which grows without limit and is never ending even so that if one goes on doing it for aeons of time, all one gets is restless disturbance all the time. Whereas the other type of work has a path with a definite conclusion and one does not have to go back and forth, and round and round, shouldering the burden of *dukkha* for ever. Of these two forms of work, those who have done both of them and have gone far enough in both will know that the results of them are utterly different and that they are poles apart. If then one were to choose in a fair and rational way which kind of work should one choose? Even if one has gone along just a little in this way one has a path that can lead one out. One is then no longer caught up in admiration for that work of turbulence, of going round and round in circles so that one forgets and loses interest in thinking about gaining Dhamma wealth for oneself and one's future.

Withdrawing From Samādhi

When one is going to withdraw from meditation practice, one should do so with mindfulness to support and look after the *citta.* If however, the *citta* is still calm in *bhavaṅga,* the situation is such that one should not force it to leave this position to withdraw from the practice of meditation, even though it is time for one to go to work or to do other things, or go *piṇḍapāta.* One should not disturb it but let it remain concentrated and calm until it withdraws on its own. Whatever external work needs to be done, it should be put aside

at a time such as this, even though the external work may be necessary and important, because the work of the *bhavaṅga citta* is of the utmost importance and incomparably more so than any external work.

If one forces the *citta* to withdraw even though the *citta* is still not skilled at entering and leaving *bhavaṅga* it will spoil it for the *citta* in the future. For the *citta* will no longer be able to concentrate together and go down into a state of calm as it did before which will make one become disheartened. This sort of thing has happened time after time amongst those who practise the way, so one should be very careful not to repeat this mistake.

In withdrawing from *samādhi,* if the *citta* has become concentrated and calm one must only leave this state when the *citta* withdraws on its own — or, when one feels tired — and then one should be fully mindful. One should not withdraw from this state abruptly or hastily, without being mindful and clearly aware *(sati–sampajañña),* which is the Dhamma that should be an accompaniment to all one's movements and changes of state.

Before withdrawing one should think about those methods that one has used, which have brought one results when practising *samādhi* — such as:

> "How did I set up mindfulness to fix the *citta?* Which *parikamma* word did I keep in mind? How fast or slowly was the heart able to become concentrated and drop into a state of calm? Or, how did I investigate and contemplate and what method did I use that my heart could be so skilful as this?"

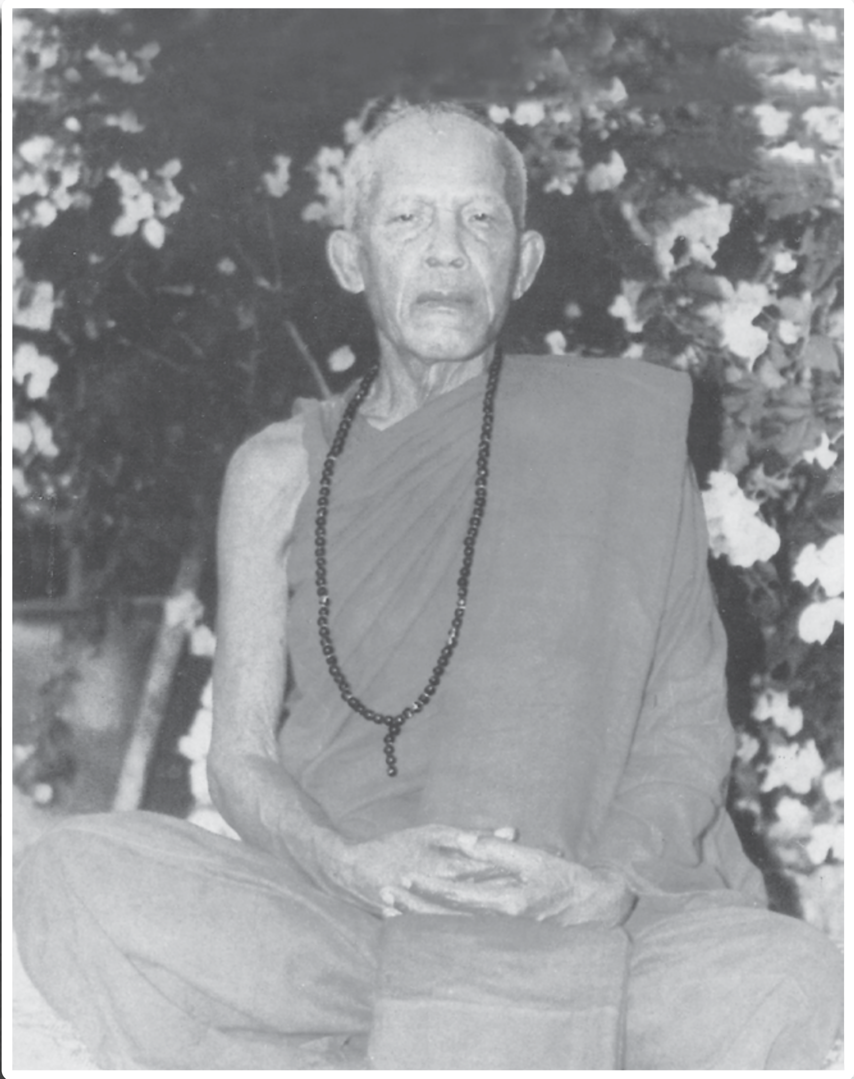
Having defined these things and taken note of them, both in terms of their causes and the results of what one did in the past on each occasion, one should gradually withdraw from *samādhi bhāvanā.* The reason why one should carefully take note of what happened, in this way, is that, when one comes to do the same thing in the future one will be able to do it correctly and easily by following the same path.

Those Bhikkhus who have been doing the practice for some time already, should take note in particular, that although they have withdrawn from *samādhi,* the mindfulness which has been supporting and upholding the *citta* should not be let go of or allowed to disperse. In the four postures of standing, walking, sitting and lying down, in doing one's duties in life, and in fact, in doing all things one should have mindfulness to accompany and watch over the *parikamma* word. Or else one should have mindfulness and clear comprehension *(sati–sampajañña)* present within one, not letting the heart go free to

be pushed about this way and that by one's various emotional attachments *(ārammaṇa)*. For this is the tendency of the *citta* which has been used to having these emotional attachments in mind all the time.

When mindfulness is present with the *parikamma* word and present in oneself generally, the behaviour which one displays outwardly by way of one's bodily actions and speech will not be faulty in any way. It will be appropriate and seemly and will not be offensive in the eyes or ears of other people. It will also make no difference whether one's actions are slow and deliberate or quick and impulsive it will still be within the bounds of what is proper, seemly and pleasant to see and hear. In addition, when one practises *samādhi bhāvanā* the *citta* can drop into a calm state quickly, because the mindfulness which controls and guards the heart and the work that one is doing are both within oneself. It is like looking after an animal which one can catch and put to work as one wants without trouble and it never acts up or does anything dangerous, as may happen if one let it go its own way *(yathā–kamma)*.

When one tries to watch and control the *citta* the whole time, even though one still cannot attain full concentration and calm as one may wish, yet it will also not go wandering about looking for things to do to create more *kamma* and difficulty for oneself, as it would if one had let it go its own way.



Venerable Ajaan Teu

14

The Importance of Mindfulness

Guarding the *citta* most of the time or the whole time, is the way to promote mindfulness and the *citta* so as to make it competent in the work of *samādhi bhāvanā* and in other kinds of work also. For then, whatever type of work is done, is done deliberately, with mindfulness to keep one's attention on that work, and it will tend to be elegant and free from fault. As to oneself, one will not be a "playboy" wasting one's life in dissipation, but a person or Bhikkhu who keeps within his level or status and does not act in ways that diminish his status and the standard of his work so that it becomes despicable. Therefore the saying that: "Mindfulness is desirable in all circumstances" is correct and most appropriate and cannot be disputed. The necessity of mindfulness will come to be seen when one practises *samādhi bhāvanā* or one investigates Dhamma in all its different aspects. In work of this kind it is essential that mindfulness should go along with it at every moment in order that one may be able to know what is happening to the *citta* and Dhamma with enough precision for one's purpose. This becomes increasingly important for those whose "ground" of *citta* and "ground" of Dhamma are above the normal level; and right up to the highest levels, mindfulness is still an essential Dhamma every time and it cannot be dispensed with. In fact, whatever acuteness, strength and capability of wisdom one has, it depends on mindfulness to support it and promote it. So even if wisdom is about to reach the ground of "Great Wisdom" *(Mahā–Paññā)* it gives an indication to mindfulness that it also must reach the ground of "Great Mindfulness" *(Mahā–Sati),* because mindfulness is that device of Dhamma which leads the way in all kinds of work. Ordinary people like ourselves who are at times unmindful, display characteristics at those times which are unseemly and inelegant; and in those cases where they let go of mindfulness in a big way, as if they have lost all interest, it seems that the time has come for them to be taken off to an "institution" — for certain!

It is for the above reasons that those who practise the way and attain Dhamma, do so either slowly or quickly depending upon the strength of their mindfulness and wisdom which are very important, and this is true even allowing for differences in character. Therefore those who urgently drive themselves to develop mindfulness will soon find that *samādhi* appears and their thoughts and insights in the direction of wisdom will come much more quickly than otherwise.

It makes me think about the task of writing a book such as this one. For it becomes quite clear how, on a day when mindfulness slips and drifts about due to a lot of confused thoughts, one's writing is full of mistakes, confusion and many corrections. But on a day when the heart is not confused and one has mindfulness present one's writing is mostly correct and good with little need for any corrections.

Those who are well known and renowned for their abilities in the *citta* and Dhamma are generally those who have mindfulness and who are able to see the importance of it. So they try to establish mindfulness the whole time without letting their minds slip into forgetfulness. In particular, when they do *samādhi bhāvanā* as well as the investigation of all forms of Dhamma, their mindfulness and wisdom must blend into one another all the time, and they do not allow them to be present sometimes and absent at others.

Whoever acts and lives like that will have *"Jāgara Dhamma"* — the Dhamma which wakes and arouses him to be vigilant — within himself wherever he goes and in whatever he does. He has a means of protecting himself which is strong and lasting, so it is difficult for an enemy to reach him and there is no danger to his heart. This is entirely different from those who are not mindful and who accumulate *dukkha* and however much they have they go on accepting it to the end.

Venerable Ajaan Mun taught the need for mindfulness very frequently and most insistently, regardless of the type of practice being used, the posture, or whether it concerned someone who was just beginning or one who had done it for a long time. In all cases he was certain to teach the need for mindfulness along with other things to suit the level of *citta* and Dhamma of the person who came to learn from him. He said how he had seen the bad effect of being without mindfulness, as well as the virtue of having mindfulness present from when one first starts to put forward the effort to do the practice right through until one has reached the final goal. He also said how both of these were very important factors which one cannot afford to neglect — and to give confidence to those who practise the way, he said:

"Regardless of age or sex, if those who do the practice have interest in and pay attention to mindfulness all the time in all postures and situations, and not in fits and starts, they should have the hope and expectation that the attainment of *samādhi (samādhi–samāpatti)* as well as the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* will not be beyond their reach."

From the time when one first starts the training one should set up mindfulness as one's constant companion and guardian. Then one's sense of oneself, of the right and wrong and the good and evil which arise in oneself and others, whatever it may be, one will be able to know for sure, and this will steadily increase while one remains mindful. At the same time one will not let go into absent mindfulness, which would allow the *kilesas* to drag out and steal the good that is in one, and swallow the lot. If one can do this one should have firm hope and expectation indeed.

Yet generally speaking, those who practise the way of Dhamma turn and become those who blame Dhamma, saying: "It hasn't given the results which it should," or "it gives me no results when I do the practice." Because those *kilesas* which led them into absent mindfulness, sneak in to take over the duty of mindfulness by getting in before mindfulness which should be the leader, and then stealthily take over the job of looking after the *citta.* This happens both when one is trying to strive at the practice and at all other times as well. This makes these people feel disappointed that they did not achieve what they thought they would. But instead of blaming themselves for losing out to the *kilesas,* they turn and blame Dhamma for giving them bad results, so they lose in all ways. This is the way of those Bhikkhus who practise without taking any interest in watching the *kilesas* which lead them into absent mindfulness, and this is the main danger, both to oneself and to one's efforts to do the practice. This great boss *(kilesas)* thus gets the opportunity to remain with the one who does the practice quite openly, without him ever becoming aware that he has been "taken for a ride."

If one is an observant person one will be able to know what has happened within a minute. For when one firsts starts to establish the practice, in any of the various ways of doing it, by setting up mindfulness in conjunction with the effort to do it, that is the time when one will be able to see how the setting up of mindfulness and the dispersing of mindfulness will fight each other, so that one can look at it and see what happens. Then before long the forgetfulness which disperses mindfulness — which is nothing but the *kilesas* intently

watching and waiting — will win and drag the *citta* away and disappear with it. From that moment all that is left is the body of one who practises without mindfulness and void of effort. If he is walking *caṅkama,* all that is left is the mere activity of walking, if sitting in *samādhi* then he is merely sitting; and if he is standing to ponder Dhamma he is merely standing, just like a puppet or a doll. It is no good searching in him for the kind of effort which is put forth by those who practise the way truly, because mindfulness which is that factor in striving to practise which gives rise to results has been entirely consumed by the *kilesa* of carelessness. All that is left is the body which is merely going through the motions of striving, and nothing else. This is how the *kilesas* destroy people and destroy the efforts of those who practise the way. Their destructiveness takes place right in front of one's eyes when one is fresh and conscious by lulling one into a deep sleep of forgetfulness even while one is actually striving to practise the way.

At any time it is quite possible to know how clever the various *kilesas* are, if one really wants to. Even when one is just beginning to work at the practice one can get to know this without much difficulty — but generally speaking one does not want to know. Instead, all one wants to know are the attainments of *samādhi (samādhi–samāpatti)* and the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna.* But what can give rise to these states of Dhamma apart from mindfulness and wisdom which are the necessary tools for clearing the way? Certainly not careless indifference, so that one has no interest in being guarded against it, for this is what destroys all forms of Dhamma, such as the above, which one wants and hopes to attain.

Sometimes when Venerable Ajaan Mun gave a talk on Dhamma, what he said was very funny and we who were listening could not help laughing inwardly. I can remember how funny it was, but the Dhamma that he was pointing out to us has almost gone now. He said:

> "If your heart was truly in your efforts to practise the way, like someone who is full of vitality and spirit, your heart would have a way in which it could develop and grow. Not like people getting into their coffins all the time as you are now. For whenever I look nowadays, all I see is scrap Bhikkhus and scrap *Sāmaṇeras,* like scrap metal, moving about and walking back and forth on the *caṅkama* path, sluggish and ungainly, without any mindfulness or awareness within them. As for any wisdom *(paññā)* or penetrating insight — if they are sitting in meditation, they merely sit there like scrap-iron men

thrown away in a shop or a factory. But even scrap iron does not sway about nodding forward and backwards like a person dying in the pose of striving at the practice — which is most annoying to see. As for the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who sits nodding out of control, whether he falls down and dies or not it is enough to trouble others who have to recite the *"Kusala–mātikā"*.[122] This is a sorry thing to see! And sometimes at night when the crows and dogs are all asleep, if anything happens, who will come and help to arrange things so that the corpse is given a traditional human funeral? If this happens in day time, the vultures and crows will be troubled also, for when they come flying around thinking that some food is available, they see it is still breathing and fidgeting and they are afraid to come too close, so they fly away and perch on a tree to wait and watch. Sometimes they think: "This is it," and they fly down to have a look at the troublesome object again feeling sure that they will be able to have a go at it this time. But as soon as they get close its mindfulness returns and it looks straight at them. So they are all afraid and fly away without much hope left. But once they have flown about the place to try and find something else to eat, they come back again. Because the appearance of this one who is trying to meditate is like someone who is half dead — as if telling the crows and vultures to come back again, saying, "It's dead now, you can come and eat it." This is how it acts all the time. It's enough to make them irritated with this waste Bhikkhu who keeps changing his position. This is the way of one who practises and causes irritation to the vultures, crows and dogs, both domestic and wild. He not only causes irritation to them, but he will break the heart of the one who teaches him which is far worse than the trouble caused to the animals who are waiting to eat the meat and bones of this Bhikkhu when he dies because he has no mindfulness to support and lift him up at all. This is a kind of practice which is an endless preparation never stopping and never giving any results."

At this point, Venerable Ajaan stopped and rested for a short while and it seemed as if he was looking to see what was the state of mind of the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* who were listening. When he saw that they were all sitting quietly and undisturbed, some afraid and some amused. Then he started speaking again, as if he was answering some of their unasked questions, saying:

122. This is the table of contents of the *"Dhammsangaṇi"*, the first book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. The table of contents lists the various different types of consciousness which are possible. This is made into a chant and is usually recited at funerals.

> "How would it be to arrange a funeral service *(Kusala–mātikā)* for a Bhikkhu who is still alive? They have the merit making ceremony *(Kusala–paṁsukūla)* for those who are dead — if they don't have the merit making ceremony to make merit for those Bhikkhus who sit in meditation and sleep as if dead even when they are still alive, won't they all fall into hell? Even when they walk *caṅkama* or sit in meditation they sway back and forth as if they are about to jump down into hell while they are still alive. When the time comes for them to truly pass away, where are they going to jump to if not to the hellish abyss of perpetual sleep?"

We who were listening had never heard of the "hellish abyss of perpetual sleep" previously, but Venerable Ajaan revealed it to us at this time.

After the meeting, various groups would quietly gather together to talk for a short while before breaking up and returning, each one to his own place where he worked at his meditation practice — which Venerable Ajaan had called a mortuary of half dead Bhikkhus preparing themselves for their funeral service. But, as I related earlier on in this book, it was strange how none of the Bhikkhus or *Sāmaṇeras* displayed any signs of irritation, of being upset, or of discontent with what Venerable Ajaan had said in his castigating talk. For each of them heard this unusual and rather amusing talk on Dhamma with inward satisfaction and pleasure, hoping that he would not finish too soon. This was probably because of their complete faith in Venerable Ajaan, that he was in a state of complete purity and that the ground of his *citta* was overflowing with *mettā.* And for that reason none of them ever felt inclined to criticise him in any way. In fact, instead of being repelled by the rather morbid tone of his talk, it aroused their mindfulness to reflect and see how baneful and harmful it was to be forgetful and without mindfulness internally within each one of them.

While giving a talk of this kind, Venerable Ajaan's appearance and tone of voice were quite intimidating, but once he had finished he immediately returned to normal, as if he had never been like that at all. Those Bhikkhus who had stayed with him for a long time, so that they had learnt to know his characteristics quite well, would talk normally with him after such a Dhamma talk, as if nothing unusual had happened just a short while ago. But those who had recently come and had just begun the training, never having been exposed to such methods of Dhamma as Venerable Ajaan used to correct and straighten their characteristics, would react in various ways when suddenly

coming up against it in this way. Some would fidget and move about, others would become conscious of aches and pains, or of getting hot, or cold, without having enough mindfulness to be able to restrain themselves and be self-controlled. Like what happened when a dog was picked up and thrown onto the body of a dead tiger; it got so frightened, all it could do was to make grunting sounds, jump away and run for its life. What was unexpected was that it left part of itself spread all over the body of that tiger. But what was it that it left behind spread all over the tiger which had so frightened it? As for the dog, it had fled without restraint.

Generally those Bhikkhus who went to receive training under Venerable Ajaan were, to begin with, rather like that dog, thrown onto the dead tiger. They did not have enough mindfulness to control themselves as they should, and standing, walking, sitting or lying down, they were always afraid that he would only criticise and scold them. But they did not think of the underlying reasons why he should do this, which are far more frightening than that dead tiger was to that dog.[123]

But those who had been under training with Venerable *Ācariya* for a long time, the more he scolded them the more it became like a remedy which quickly cured their sickness. And no sick person is going to get angry and resentful with the doctor who quickly gives him some medicine to help him overcome that sickness which is bearing down on him so that he cannot save himself. Instead, he is likely to be grateful and thankful towards the doctor who can find a way to save his life, which he, the doctor, does because he has the *Mettā* to give help to others.

Those who practise the way and see the danger of being stupid — which is due to their own *kilesas* bearing down on them and piling up against them will be happy and smile with contentment at such strong yet kindly teaching. This teaching which is given with the aim of curbing and curing their own

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123. To say that dogs are frightened of tigers is an understatement; in fact, they are terrified of them. If they meet a tiger, whatever shit they have in their bowels, it all pours out. But generally when a dog meets a tiger, it becomes petrified and cannot run away. It just stands there stiff and shits. Even when one picks up a dog and throws it onto a dead tiger, as related above, the same thing happens; and this is because of a deep rooted instinct in canines which have always had this fear. Those people who live in and about the forests where tigers roam are bound to know how dogs react to tigers. But those of you who have lived in the cities or in Bangkok all your lives may not know about this — or you may not believe it — but, in fact, this is true and correct.

(Note: This footnote is part of the original Thai text. In the original it was included in the body of the text, enclosed in brackets.)

kilesas; and it comes from an *Ācariya* whose *citta* is full of *mettā* and thoughts of helping others in all sorts of ways to get free from, to avoid and evade the *kilesas* and a mass of suffering, and not to give way, lie down submerged and defeated, completely subject to the power of the *kilesas* which always bear down and force one towards destruction and ruin.

Listening to Dhamma Talks From the Teacher

When one listened to the Dhamma teaching of Venerable Ajaan, if one listened for the sake of Dhamma and truth, opening one's heart to its deep knowledge and true reasoning, without holding oneself back to let the *kilesas* of conceited opinions *(diṭṭhi–māna)* obstruct and influence the Dhamma which he revealed, then one would hear Dhamma that went to one's heart. This Dhamma could cure the *kilesas* one after another like going straight up steps, in a manner which one realised quite clearly in one's heart while listening to him each time he gave a talk to us. In particular, if something happened to surprise or stir him such as a chance event, or something connected with one of the Bhikkhus, he would seize this as an opportunity to set it up as an example to reveal Dhamma then and there. At such times what he said was much more valuable to the listener than those more normal occasions when he gave a talk. Those who tended to be afraid of Venerable Ajaan would become so full of fear as to be almost out of their wits. But those who were more intent on reason, truth and Dhamma got this in full measure depending on their own ability in mindfulness and wisdom.

The Dhamma which came from Venerable Ajaan at such a time was not like anything that they had previously heard. But it was absolutely appropriate to that occasion without repeating the pattern of anything he had said in the past. Because it was a characteristic of Venerable Ajaan Mun's way when revealing Dhamma that he would not normally repeat lines of talk which he had already used in the past. Even those old sayings and proverbs which he may have used before, when he brought them up again he would interpret them anew without repeating his former explanation. Although his meaning may be close to what he had previously said it still acted as a skilful method which we who were listening to him could use, and we could not help but admire

his skill time and again. It showed that the research which he had done within himself was in accordance with what is called *"True Paṭisambhidānusāsata"*.[124]

Those who had stayed with him for some time grew more and more to like that Dhamma of Venerable Ajaan's which was forceful, strong, impressive and rousing, much more than they liked his normal, milder approach, because its "flavour" was so unusually impressive. But those who had never before heard such Dhamma would think that he was scolding them and they would become frightened to the point where they would forget to pay attention to the truth of his reasoning at that time. So what they got out of listening to his Dhamma was entirely different, almost as if there had been two separate Dhamma talks although in fact both groups heard it at the same time.

When Venerable Ajaan taught Dhamma to those Bhikkhus who practised the way and were close to him, he would teach in a manner that went directly to the truth of causes and their effects without mincing his words or wrapping them up nicely. He would range through all the levels of *samādhi,* all the grounds of wisdom and all three of the *Ti–Lakkhaṇa.*[125] Whatever things he was dealing with, he would bring them to life, clear the way and reveal them as they are for those who were listening, in a manner which went right to the heart. This was most appropriate to those Bhikkhus whose hearts were skilful in every stage of *citta bhāvanā* — but the one who is writing cannot reveal everything that he said, for this Dhamma was just between Venerable Ajaan and the one who was receiving it. All that can be said is that it was Dhamma of the type that is "very hot and spicy" — which frightened the *kilesas* and drove them away in large numbers because of the power of this "Austere *(Tapa)* Dhamma" which scorched them and drove them out and away from his remarkable or miraculous teaching *(anusāsanīya–pāṭihāriya)* like water being dried up by the sun. It was as if one could see all the clans, families and relatives of all the different types of *kilesas* being broken up and forced to disperse in disarray without retaining any semblance of order, at that time.

It is said that when the Lord Buddha reached the end of a Dhamma talk, some or many of his faithful followers penetrated the exalted Path and Fruition Dhamma from the lowest level of the *Ariya* Dhamma up to the highest level. In this present age, although the type of Dhamma talk of the kind which

124. One who exhorts others using analytical or discriminatory knowledge. The four kinds of analytical knowledge *(paṭisambhidā)* are: 1) of meaning, 2) of Dhamma, 3) of language, 4) of how to put the former three into witty and appropriate speech.

125. See footnote number 63 on page 148.

reveals the elements of the worlds *(loka–dhātu)* which Venerable Ajaan Mun taught to the circle of Bhikkhus who were practising the way may be only an insignificant shadow in comparison with what the Buddha taught, yet when the writer compares them together to assess the truth of the above assertion, he cannot help but have complete faith that what is said to have happened after the Dhamma talks of the Lord Buddha is completely true. Those who say he is gullible and believes too easily may say so, but those who believe will continue to believe what we have written. For the *kilesas* are a true and genuine factor in the Noble Truths *(Ariya–Sacca)* and the Dhamma which cures and overcomes these *kilesas* is also a true factor in the *Ariya Sacca.* When the (second) truth reaches the (first) truth in full force, the *citta* is bound to experience a manifest result every time and everywhere that it happens, in everybody without exception.

The Lord Buddha taught the truth of Dhamma and Venerable Ajaan Mun also taught the truth of Dhamma, for the purpose of curing the *kilesas* which truly exist and have always done so in every age and time in the same way as they do now. Therefore, whoever may give such teaching, the loss and dispersal of the *kilesas* which occurs due to the Dhamma teaching which washes and cleanses them out is valid as far as reason is concerned. One should not object to this, because both the *kilesas* and the Path *(Magga)* do not depend on anything except only on the acquisition and accumulation of the *kilesas* and the curing of the *kilesas* — that's all. It is like a thing or a place which is filthy, the cleansing of it depends only on its being washed with clean water.

While listening to Venerable Ajaan Mun giving a Dhamma talk, those in particular whose *cittas* had reached the ground of wisdom should have been in a fit state to be able to analyse and see the implications of what he said while following the lead given by Venerable Ajaan. This means seeing clearly while wisdom is destroying the *kilesas* by relying upon Venerable Ajaan's Dhamma to prepare the ground. Those who were listening and analysing following Venerable Ajaan's lead would therefore at the same time be curing the *kilesas* bit by bit accordingly. By listening, analysing and curing some of one's problems this time, and then listening to another Dhamma talk in the future, doing further analysis and making further inroads into the *kilesas,* and by going on in this way many times they must surely be able to get through the thick jungle of the *kilesas* and go free. Therefore those who do not want to let others believe that listening to a Dhamma talk can lead to the penetration of the Path and Fruition, would seem to be making an exhibition of those *kilesas*

which they have been fond of displaying in the past. For normally, the *kilesas* do not like reason, but rather, they like making a display of self and flattering their owners that they are clever — even though they are not clever, and even though those who truly are clever and wise and far more senior, keep on blaming them and remonstrating with them all the time.

The hearts of those who were training in the basis of *samādhi* — a state of calm, would, as soon as they heard Venerable Ajaan's Dhamma, drop into a state of calm much more easily than when they were doing the practice on their own, because his Dhamma would pacify and soothe them while they were listening. So listening to Dhamma is a practice that is an important branch in the whole field of striving to practise the way.

As for those who have never done any practice and never listened enough for any results to become apparent, if they want to go their own way and follow their own understanding, they are free to do so. But in truth and in accordance with what is valuable and useful, this is not the way to gain anything of any use at all. All that is likely to come from it is defilements which stain the name of Buddhism, causing disheartenment to those who have set themselves to practise the way and making them fed up with this sort of thing, so that they laugh inwardly while saying to themselves: "This clever genius thinks he'll become enlightened by his opinions and opposition to the true way!" For they brush aside and dispense with the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* saying: "We should leave it alone as being only within the power of other people in other ages and places." But for themselves, they just swallow the emotional attitudes of opposition and opinionatedness which becomes the ground of their hearts.

When an Ācariya, one who practises the way, asks his followers, just after he has given them a Dhamma talk, saying: "While listening to this talk did you get any sense of it, or not?", he is asking them whether they got a sense of calm and peace, or whether they got any insight in the way of wisdom, respectively, depending on the ground of their *citta* and Dhamma which is different in each one of those who were listening to his Dhamma talk. He is not asking them whether they took note of and remembered the meaning of the Dhamma which he revealed, although some of it might have dropped into their memories, which they could then easily recall. But it is not at all

necessary to be able to remember or recall whatever has slipped away, for the important thing is to set one's *citta* to attend with present awareness right there while listening and not forgetfully slipping away to other seductive and emotionally charged topics, but having mindfulness to accompany the *citta* with the duty of maintaining inward self-knowing. The flow of Dhamma which the Venerable *Ācariya* is revealing will then enter and make contact with this knowing which has already been properly established and one will hear clearly and listen to every word, far more so than sending the *citta* outwards to receive Dhamma. The *citta* and the flow of Dhamma with which it makes contact and acknowledges, not in fits and starts but steadily and continually can lull and soothe the *citta* causing it to become calm and unwavering, and to drop into *samādhi*. Then while listening, other emotionally charged sense stimuli do not intrude and cause trouble, nor does the *citta* go out and become involved with external things which arouse interest, which agitate the heart making it dull and inert. So there is just the *citta* and Dhamma in contact with each other and the *citta* will tend to become calm by itself.

Once it has become calm there will be no more enticing thoughts and imaginings to cause disturbance and one tends automatically to forget one's tiredness, aches and stiffness as well as the passing of time. In fact it seems at this time almost as if one did not have a body, for all that remains is the resulting peace and calm, letting the *citta* drink of the best nutritive essence rather than the other thoughts and sensations to which it is attached *(ārammaṇa).*

While the *citta* and Dhamma are intimately associated together as one entity there will be no weariness, irritation or boredom for however long it may last. For, as long as the *citta* does not withdraw from this state of calm, the body will not be troubled with any painful feelings nor will the *citta* be bothered by emotionally biased objects and situations *(ārammaṇa).* The heart and Dhamma will then be together with each other, dwelling in a state of calm and peace for they have never been antagonistic to each other since the beginning of time. But as soon as any other, emotionally biased object or state arises and becomes manifest it arouses antagonism. Then the body feels weary, the heart becomes irritable, sleepiness grows strong and one's flesh, sinews and bones in various parts of the body start to give rise to aches and pains which rapidly spread everywhere, as if its parts are going one after another into a state of decay. Because those *kilesas* which are the basis of laziness tend to go around the various parts of the body, disturbing them and inducing them all

to ache and pain and give trouble. Finally, the effort to practise breaks up and becomes incoherent, diffuse and half-hearted in an incompetent way, because this is in fact just what it is.

This is the story of the *kilesas* and all kinds of them work in the same way. They all lead people and other beings to harm and destruction whatever type they may be. So they are called *"Māra"* — the Evil One. If there are few of them they cause trouble and damage in a small way, but if they are many they cause much trouble and much destruction. They are in opposition to Dhamma, which is the one that helps, supports and promotes us in all ways that are good. The more Dhamma a person has, the more it will tend to make his heart calm and peaceful, and he can go on gaining more and more Dhamma until his heart is entirely Dhamma. Then he will have changed entirely and become Dhamma throughout. Such are the ones who are entirely possessed of Dhamma and possessed of supreme and eternal happiness.

When Venerable Ajaan Mun used to ask whether we had got the meaning of a talk on Dhamma that he had just given, the above explanation is what he meant. Starting from a state of calm and happiness while still listening, right up to a state of brightness and clarity in wisdom that can enable one to get rid of some of the *kilesas* each time, depending on one's own ground or level. This is what he meant by "getting the meaning" while listening to a Dhamma talk. It may happen many times until one can finally reach the end of the *kilesas* and know all Dhamma at that moment, and this is what he called "getting the whole meaning".

Generally speaking, the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* listen to Dhamma and "get the meaning". They set up the intention to "get the meaning" where the heart and Dhamma come together and the result of this is a state of calm and clear seeing which arises in the heart. As for remembering the gist of the Dhamma which was revealed in the talk, they do not consider this to be so important as keeping their attention firmly fixed where Dhamma and the heart come together. Because of this, however many of them are sitting and listening to the Dhamma talk, they are so still it seems almost as if nobody is there. For each of them has fixed his attention to listen in his own heart, and each one is just like a tree stump, motionless, without any sign of fidgeting to show that he is tired or bored and has had enough. The only sound is that of Venerable Ajaan who is delivering a concentrated form of Dhamma which puts one in mind of a heavy thunderstorm with hailstones and high winds

blowing and gusting about this way and that. At this time it also seems as if all the *kilesas* and evil *kamma* would be blown away and destroyed by the blast flowing from the Dhamma. Because while listening with fixed and firm attention to the meaning, not one of the *kilesas* is going to show its face and open its mouth to display its conceit and arrogance while mindfulness and wisdom are cutting them down and chopping them to pieces with all their strength. All that remains is Dhamma which externally is the sound of Dhamma, and internally is the heart immersed and infused together with Dhamma as one, with nothing but joy and happiness accompanying the calm and peaceful Dhamma which is experienced arising in the heart.

Each time, the Dhamma talk would last three or four hours, after which, if any of us had any problems that were appropriate, we could respectfully ask the Venerable Ajaan to help and point out the solution to the problem until it was well understood. After this we would disperse, each one returning to the place where he was staying. Some would then go to walk on their *caṅkama* paths to ease the stiffness from sitting a long time and to remove the *kilesas* from their hearts, using whatever method in which their mindfulness and wisdom is strong and capable of practising. They would probably go on walking for several hours before stopping and going to have a rest. But on those days when there is a Dhamma talk, the time when they leave off to take a rest is much later than usual, because they consider that they are special days and special occasions. So some of them decide to maintain their striving only in the three postures of standing, walking and sitting until dawn, without lying down and sleeping.

There are two reasons why they do not lie down and sleep at night. The first is because they want to struggle and make great efforts in their striving, as a way of paying homage to the Dhamma which Venerable Ajaan revealed with great *mettā* in the most heartfelt way right through from beginning to end. For after listening, faith would arise and increase, giving them the will to struggle, to try to do, and to follow what he taught with such *mettā.* The second reason why they take no sleep is because they have absorbed the Dhamma of Venerable Ajaan very deeply and the flavour of Dhamma which remains in their hearts is what has opened up their hearts.

The extent to which each of them absorbed Dhamma in their hearts, varied in accordance with the ground or basis which each of them have in their hearts. Some of them have a weak basis of *samādhi,* some have a more subtle basis, and some of them have a very subtle and intimate ground of *samādhi.* But each

level brings enough of the bliss *(pīti)* of Dhamma to enable them to absorb it joyfully in accordance with the level of each one's ground. In addition, some of them would begin to train themselves in wisdom *(vipassanā–paññā)* in a weak way as accords with their level of *samādhi;* some would be analysing with wisdom *(vicāra–vipassanā)* more strongly; some would be developing wisdom higher and higher; and some would be developing wisdom at that level where it has become automatic. This is when mindfulness and wisdom, incessantly go around and about everywhere with various kinds of Dhammas[126] that come into contact with the heart without letting up nor letting go of them. If one likens it to the falling rain, it would be like a heavy downpour going on all day and night incessantly. Or, if one likens it to water, it would be like a spring which flows all the time in both the rainy season and the dry season. But in the case of *Vipassanā–Dhamma,* it is referred to by its characteristics and called by the "forest" name of *"Automatic mindfulness and wisdom".* But if one wants to call it by its original name which they used at the time of the Lord Buddha, then it was called *"Mahā Sati and Mahā Paññā"* so it should not be lacking in valuable properties. For mindfulness and wisdom at this level perform their functions at maximum capacity the whole time without stopping, hesitation or being sluggish. Nor do they need any coercion or force, unlike the more usual types of mindfulness and wisdom; for they know their job and they know their duty in full measure. But to call it *Mahā Sati* and *Mahā Paññā* as they did at the time of the Lord Buddha would be against the nature of those Bhikkhus who live in the forest who are afraid of making out that they are the equal of those at the time of the Lord. So instead, they just call it "Automatic mindfulness and wisdom" — which would seem to be quite appropriate to their level and characteristics.

These are the Dhammas which lead the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* to become fascinated and absorbed in their striving so that they lay down and sleep very little. Each one of them becomes absorbed in Dhamma in his own way, depending on his ground or level, and when any doubts or problems arise, some of them are not bold enough to go and ask Venerable Ajaan about them at normal times. But on a day when a meeting is called they feel as if they could jump over the moon, because they are so glad to hear a talk which will clear the way and show them how to develop those points which they have been thinking about and analysing; and will also clear those problems which they were doubtful about so that they can go ahead step by step.

126. Dhammas here refers to both things in the Dhamma talk and also to *dhammas,* for which see footnote number 39 on page 95.

Each of them gets prepared and sets up a state of zeal, waiting ready to receive the cleansing Dhamma from Venerable Ajaan Mun as if they had been waiting years for it. So when the time comes they gather at the meeting place in a calm, modest and graceful manner which should arouse much respect and faith in anyone who saw it — a thing such as is rarely seen elsewhere. Each one of them goes to the meeting intent on the purpose of Dhamma and with a determination to hear Dhamma which goes to the heart and each of them pays obeisance by prostrating before sitting down politely while waiting to hear Dhamma.

As soon as he is ready, the *Ācariya* who is giving the talk begins to reveal Dhamma. Quietly and gently it flows out, steadily, without breaks, like rain when it starts to fall drop by drop. But, before he begins to talk he calms down any turbulence of mind that may be present for a short while. I think and believe that he was probably determining what aspect of Dhamma he should deal with which would be suited to those who were waiting ready to listen to him. It was after this that he would begin to reveal that Dhamma which he taught only to the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus.* Generally speaking he would start from the level of *samādhi* and then go on to wisdom, finally leading to the highest level of Dhamma — *Vimutti,* Freedom — and then finish. While he was revealing Dhamma there were no disturbing sounds at all, but only the sound of Dhamma that he was proclaiming which resonated around the place where they had met together. Those who were listening, were doing so with interest, waiting to know and wanting to see accordingly, in conformity with Venerable Ajaan's teaching, fully committed and wholeheartedly. Not slipping away into forgetfulness and distraction so that the *citta* ran away elsewhere, but keeping their attention fixed firmly looking at the heart alone, which is worthy of Dhamma at all levels.

In this way, the Dhamma which the *Ācariya* reveals and the heart which is set, ready to accept it properly, are both suitable and appropriate for experiencing all sorts of things to enter, make contact and get involved with the heart. Whether he talks of the Noble Truths, the *Satipaṭṭhānas,* or the *Ti–Lakkhaṇa — Anicca, Dukkha, Anattā* — they are equally the truth and embrace the whole field of human beings and all other beings throughout the whole universe *(Ti–loka–dhātu),* which he reveals at that time. So it is like listening to the truth of the Universe flowing in and filling the heart which having been prepared to accept and know it in a fully committed way, makes

them listen wholeheartedly. Because the Dhamma which goes back and forth, making contact with things both near and far, internally and externally while Venerable *Ācariya* brought them up and displayed them is the Dhamma which helps in all ways in everything down in the body and the *citta* of those who can listen to it, and there is no way left for doubt to arise.

After listening to the talk which Venerable Ajaan gave, with great *mettā* and hearing about what is good and virtuous as well as what is bad and faulty, the heart of the listener which has in the past gathered, accumulated and guarded all the *kilesas,* thinking of them as being fundamentally good things right from the first beginning should be willing to let go of them and get rid of them, otherwise it means that his heart must have been much too blind, dull and closed. But who would deliberately set themselves to accumulate and shower more *dukkha* on themselves at such a time? Especially after they had determined to listen to the truth with full-hearted willingness, from their *Ācariya* who reveals Dhamma that is wholly true? Rather, they would just be listening to his teaching which was true Dhamma, so as to see clearly what was faulty and what virtuous in themselves, following his talk. Then those things which were wrong and faulty should be willingly let go of whereas those that were virtuous should be held to and developed in accordance with the truth and their intention, this is the only way for them.

Therefore, those who listen for the sake of the truth of Dhamma which the *Ācariya* is displaying in a true and valid way, have a means of "knowing" and of "getting rid of", and this is the result that comes, and this result is their confirmation and guarantee. Diseases which are cured by medicines, and *kilesas* which are got rid of by Dhamma are both instances of natural processes which are used in the world and in Dhamma respectively. The exceptions are of course the disease which does not "listen" to the medicine and the type of *kilesas* which will not look at Dhamma. Wherever such a situation exists and arises it is bound to lead to ruin inescapably — so such people are said to be "beyond hope".



Venerable Ajaan Kongma

15

The Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus' Ways of Behaviour

Behaving in Economic Ways

The *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* and, in particular, Venerable Ajaan Mun have always tended to be fastidiously careful and economical with their possessions and the things which they use. Venerable Ajaan was never wasteful and this he maintained without exception throughout. However, many of the requisites he had, and other things which were helpful in his way of life, he never used them in an ostentatious way and he always kept up these practices consistently. But when it came to giving help to other Bhikkhus, whatever he had and however much, he was ready to give all of it, and he was never seen to keep back and accumulate things. He used to give things away to help the Bhikkhus, novices, the elder monks, *Upāsakas,* the poor lay followers and others who came to see him, and it seemed to all of us who knew him that his *citta* was brimful with *mettā* and compassion for the whole world without limit.

As for the requisites and other things that he himself wore and used, he acted in a different way, for he acted as if he was a destitute Bhikkhu, as if he had nothing of any value on him at all. His three robes and bathing cloth were all worn and torn and one could see that they were made up of bits and pieces put together and patched and mended all over. When one first saw them one could not help feeling a bit upset and sorry, because it was so unusual to see such a thing in the *Sangha* in Thailand. In fact Venerable Ajaan was probably the first to do such a thing nowadays, for he tried to keep on patching and mending his robes until there was hardly anything but patches left. Until the substance of the original cloth had become rotten and entirely

disappeared and it looked as if it was a robe made up entirely of patches of new cloth sewn together. Thus the robe, being made of bits of cloth of different shades of colour, appeared mottled like the stripes of a tiger or the spots of a leopard. When the robe finally became unfit to wear, he still would not throw it away, but used it first as a towel or as foot rags, and afterwards for other things where it would still be of some value. Until finally it was torn to bits and so broken up that there was nothing more that one could do with it. Only then would he agree to throw it away.

Whatever cloth it was — whether his three principle robes which he wore, or any other cloth that he used, if it was torn it had to be patched up and mended until finally it became offensive in the sight of most people. For people had never seen anyone act like this in Thailand where there has always been plenty of the necessities of life. So people forget themselves and naturally tend to be extravagant and opulent, even amongst the poor. But Venerable Ajaan was never concerned about other people blaming and praising him for acting in this way. Even with the various utensils and other things which were used in the monastery, such as the bamboo buckets (for scooping up water), tin cans, water scoops and all sorts of other things. For when any of them were damaged he would take them and mend them or adapt them to some new purpose where they would be of some use until they finally reached a state where they were beyond recovery when he would consent to throw them away.

In looking after his possessions and other things which were used either in the Wat or the hut where he stayed he was very strict. For everything had to be put away properly or arranged in an orderly and tidy manner, not just thrown down anywhere so that they may be lost or get in the way and be a nuisance about the place. If in putting anything away after using it, someone put it in the wrong place or improperly, he would ask and find out who had done it and then immediately rebuke and scold him and teach him not to do that again.

Once there was a Bhikkhu who had some doubts in his mind, or maybe he just wanted to find out how Venerable Ajaan would react, and he asked him:

> "As far as your possessions and the other things are concerned it is not important, but when it comes to your outer robe *(saṅghāṭi)* your inner robe *(cīvara)* and the skirt robe *(sabong)* which are a Bhikkhu's most important

requisites, Venerable Ajaan should use the new robes which the lay supporters give, so as to respond to their gifts of faith. For Venerable Ajaan is not hard up nor without support and people often come here with faith and give all the requisites. As for your old robes, you should throw them out so that others who want them could take them as objects of reverence, so please give them away. But you should not keep using them until they are all torn and patched up everywhere so that they give a mottled appearance like a leopard walking past a market place which is how it is at present. For when your followers see you like this they feel uncomfortable and ashamed in the face of the villagers who come here all the time to pay homage and give *dāna* to Venerable Ajaan. For they all give plenty of *dāna* willingly, of all kinds every time, and it is not as though we were so hard up that you need to be very economical in the use of your robes, patching and mending them as you do at present. This makes us feel too ashamed for Venerable Ajaan and we would rather that you did not do this. In fact we would like Venerable Ajaan to act in a way which is more appropriate to your renown as an *Ācariya* who teaches people from all over the country."

"I have made this request to Venerable Ajaan with sincere respect, faith and affection. But when I see Venerable Ajaan wearing robes and using things which are torn, worn out, all patched up and mended the whole time without ever changing them for new ones, even when we have got them, it makes me feel inferior and ashamed in the face of the lay people. As if my Teacher has no value. Please forgive me if what I have said is wrong or improper in any way, but I have done so with the best of intentions and only because I have the greatest reverence and respect for Venerable Ajaan."

After he had finished speaking and respectfully saluted, Venerable Ajaan sat quietly, almost as if he had not heard, and all the other Bhikkhus kept quiet and still, waiting. Then Venerable Ajaan began to speak in a calm level voice, saying:

"The Lord Buddha was supremely clever and wise and the bliss which he discovered and which comes from wisdom was superior to everything known in the worlds. The Buddha was the first to discover it, and the teaching which he gave to those companions who were also seeking the way, was "beyond the clouds" — in other words, beyond all conventional suppositions *(sammuti).* Nobody else could practise the way and teach as the Lord did,

for the Dhamma Teaching *(Sāsana–Dhamma)* which came from his mouth is a "middle way Dhamma" *(Majjhima–Dhamma),* which is always appropriate and well suited to people in all ages and places. It did not conflict with the truth which would have made it blameworthy to his associates who were looking for a reasoned teaching to show them how to go onwards for the purpose of salvation and safety by following this teaching."

"In his practice, the Lord did everything with carefulness and circumspection. In his experience of Dhamma, he experienced it with the carefulness and circumspection of Dhamma. So that the teaching which he taught was also done with carefulness and circumspection in accordance with the principles of the *Sāsadā* — the Great Teacher, who was the first Teacher, and it has never been found to be deficient or defective in any of its parts as the religious teaching *(Sāsana–Dhamma)* of the Lord. Therefore, if we who are just practising this teaching, compare what we are doing with the energetic striving and the accompanying difficulties and torments which the Lord endured for the sake of his followers, all of us would appear weak and flabby, just waiting to eat our next meal, for we do not have any great difficulties to contend with at all. Just think about the Lord and how he led the *Sāvakas* to practise the way! Did he lead them to be conceited, proud and playful, or to be content and satisfied with what they have got and glad to have whatever happens to come in the way of requisites and other things that are of use? Did he lead them into ways of plentiful abundance of things as if turning them into living corpses possessed by the *kilesas* and *taṇhā,* or into the way of having few possessions and freedom from all worry? Did he lead them by being thrifty and by curbing those desires which draw them on and inundate their hearts so that they are never satisfied and never have enough? Or by being extravagant and distracted because of carelessness and lack of mindfulness?"

"This is enough for you to be able to see that those Bhikkhus who turn themselves into such conceited and extravagant people are difficult to look after, both for themselves and for other people. They have big mouths and large stomachs, and even though the lay supporters are many and generous, they cannot keep up with the *kilesas* in the hearts of such Bhikkhus."

"Keeping and looking after things which are of such a nature that one can see potentials for further use and value in them, and being economical and thrifty in all forms of wealth so that they will always last a long time

by not disturbing them and speculating with them and opening a possibility of their all being lost, and this is the way that people who are rational and clever act and do things. Such people are not conceited, puffed up and vain, nor do they show off without having any real substance in themselves.[127] For to be like that would lead to their wealth being all frittered and wasted away however much they started out with. None of that which should have brought them enough profit to form the root and basis of life and future virtue would remain and they would not even have the pittance of a poor man who has an economical nature and trains himself to be thrifty."

"But those who laid down roots and a basis of behaviour which is good and gracious and which gives the world a way to think and to set up basic principles about wealth and the *citta* from that time on were not wastefully extravagant. They were not spendthrifts, led on by ambition without ever being able to restrain themselves all through their lives. For whoever is foolish enough to promote such strange thoughts and to act on them will become a dead person of the kind who has no graveyard to go to and leading all his progeny to go the same way also."

Venerable Ajaan then asked that Bhikkhu:

"Have you ever seen how a monkey takes food which is given to it by a person, and how it eats the food?"

He replied:

"Yes, I have seen it, but I have never noticed how it takes the food nor how it eats it."

To which Venerable Ajaan replied:

"You haven't even noticed how a monkey eats and you are not able to answer me on this point. Then why is it that you are bringing into question the way that I use my requisites, without putting forward any good reasons which would be worth listening to? I am always ready to listen to words of both praise and criticism, because the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is to be found everywhere and even words of praise and criticism are Dhamma if one examines them impartially and lets them be Dhamma. But if one

127. Literal translation: Without being able to find any "meat on the bone".

does not examine them properly, they become the 'way of the world' and a cause of delusion — both words of praise and of blame."

"You have not even noticed the way of living and eating of the monkeys sufficiently to know something of their nature, so how can you know anything about the way of living and utilising things of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* and the way they practised in their capacity as the Great Teacher *(Sāsadā)* and the Sons of the Sākya who can be a sure refuge to the world."

"Do you want to hear some of the ways in which the natures of monkeys are different from those of people, or not? If you don't want to hear about the nature of monkeys to add to your mindfulness and wisdom, but want to fly up into the sky to know about the Aryan ways and customs of the *Sāsana,* I am afraid it would be climbing up too high and I don't want to give any such explanation to you."

"I have never heard anyone talk about the nature and characteristics of monkeys," the Bhikkhu replied. "But when Venerable Ajaan asked me about it I became curious and I would like to know how they are different from human beings. Before now I have seen them often in passing, but I got tired of them and did not like to look at them, because they are animals which by nature are disorderly and they cannot keep still and live quietly together. But I don't know anything more profound than this about them."

After this Venerable Ajaan Mun went on to explain to this Bhikkhu about the nature of monkeys saying:

"Monkeys are like people who have disorderly habits and who don't like living quietly and peacefully in the manner and way of Dhamma as gentle people do. They are animals who like to act playfully, and this is true whether small or large and male or female, and this trait runs through the whole of the monkey family. Their inconsequential playfulness knows no bounds or limits — like people who have never been trained in moral ways. Even when they become old and grey or white-haired like wool, they never know the meaning of calm and peace, what causes it and how, and one can never trust them even when they have been brought up and lived with people the whole time until they become adults. For their natures and characteristics remain unchanged and they show no interest in taking up and assuming any human characteristics at all. They were born as monkeys, they live as monkeys and they die as monkeys and they never pick up any other traits."

"People who take up and assume the characteristics of the monkeys as their own are therefore much worse, evil and violent than monkeys, and they cause a lot of trouble and do widespread harm in the world, far beyond what monkeys are capable of doing. When I was staying in a cave where lots of monkeys were milling about, I saw for myself what they were like. This was when I first went out wandering and doing the ascetic practices *(Dhutangas)* and I had not learnt enough about the nature of these animals. When they came around searching for food in front of the mouth of the cave where I was staying, they were, at first, afraid. But after they had seen enough of me to realise that I was not dangerous to them they came by looking for food almost every day."

"Seeing these monkeys coming in large numbers, I felt sorry for them as they swarmed about climbing up and down in the area in front of the cave. There were both large and small ones and none of them were interested in this person. After I had eaten my food in the morning, I would give them what was left over, sharing it out between them. When it was time for them to come, there were bananas, rice and fruit of various kinds which I laid out on an outcrop of rock so that they could come and take it themselves. As soon as I had finished putting it out and turned my back, they all went for the food, scrambling and fighting each other for it in complete confusion and turmoil without any thought or fear of me at all. The next day they came earlier and waited for me to put out food for them. After only two or three days of this they showed themselves up for what they really were in no uncertain way without any deference to me, or fear. They all came in, jumping all over the place and searching for food where I was staying until all my possessions were scattered all over the place. This happened while I was away getting food on *piṇḍapāta*, but also, when I was there, some of them even came up baring their teeth as if they were about to bite me while moving their mouths and twisting their eyebrows into a menacing expression, trying to frighten me. As if to say, "we monkeys are much quicker and more slick than human beings, and people cannot compete with us. If you don't want to be hurt you better not cause any trouble or we are likely to jump on you without warning." I had to use various ways to scare them off until they all decided to go away from that district. After that I learned not to give food to any of the monkeys even though I felt sorry for them, nor did I make any gesture indicating intimacy with them, in the way that I had previously done. Therefore they never came and bothered me any more."

"These are animals that cannot be trusted at all. Even if one feels sorry for them and looks after them well, they are still monkeys who are restlessly playful and tricky, who know nothing of virtue nor recognise that one is helping them. When I gave food out to them, they all ran and crowded around me in a most obnoxious way. They were so greedy for the food that some of them almost bit my hand, for they quickly came in snatching and grabbing while jumping excitedly about. It was really a loathsome spectacle to see the way they crowded around while shouting "gawk gack" and trying to intimidate me, even while I was giving them food out of kindness. Monkeys are really the most dreadful and irritating animals."

"Have you ever noticed what those monkeys are like that people look after at home and, when one stretches one's hand out to give some food to them, how they react, both to this food and to the person giving it?"

The Bhikkhu replied, saying:

"I don't know, because all I did was give them food and did not notice while doing so how they reacted or what characteristics they displayed."

Venerable Ajaan continued with his explanation, saying:

"It makes little difference who gives food to this class of animal, for they are mainly interested in what they are going to get right now. Their eyes will be fixed firmly on the food while they jump up and down. But in a level open place they run back and forth with their hands stretched out to snatch the food from the hand of the person who is feeding them. Once they have got hold of it they quickly peel it, tear it open and eat it immediately while their eyes roll about looking here and there restlessly as well as looking at the fruit in their hands while breaking it apart, biting, chewing and swallowing it. If they see that there is still some food left in that person's hand and a chance that they may get some more, they quickly chew up what they have got, stuffing it in their checks while keeping their eyes on his hand and stretching out their hands to ask for more. If he gives them some more food they quickly eat and swallow some and stuff some in their checks again, and any that is left over they just throw away. Then they stretch out their hands again, asking for more! Their begging can never be satisfied however much one gives them and they will go on and on until

there is none left. Only then do they stop and turn to chewing up the food stored in their checks."

"Monkeys are very extravagant and wasteful animals and they are never satisfied with what a person gives them while they can get more out of him. Even though their stomachs are quite small, like other animals of the same body size, yet their greed, extravagance and wastefulness are so great that it is hard to find any other animal to equal them."

"You will probably understand that I brought up the ways of the monkeys as a kind of simile for comparison with your request for me to dispose of my old possessions and change them for new ones, even though the old ones are still usable. In other words you are asking me to act like those monkeys, and to accept monkeys as the great teacher *(Sāsadā),* to teach me in place of the *Sāsana* of the Lord Buddha who knew what was appropriate and sufficient in all things. Because the manner of acting which you asked me to practise is the way that the monkeys act which accords with their animal nature which knows nothing of what is meant by Dhamma. But someone who knows something of what is meant by Dhamma should think and consider his own position as well as the position of Dhamma in regard to what is appropriate for him to do or not do."

"To speak with the intention of promoting what is good is praiseworthy, but the value in your intention is not compatible with the loss of Dhamma which would be incurred. This means such forms of Dhamma as, being content with little, for this Dhamma has always brought calm and peace to the world since long ago. This is because it is a form of Dhamma well suited to those in the world who are contented and glad to keep within bounds, and who have limiting conditions[128] in their hearts which they should cherish and keep close to and strive to practise and follow gladly, not letting the value, the essence, which comes from the Dhamma slip away and be lost, to their regret."

"You should think deeply and carefully about the *Sāsana,* and about the owner of the *Sāsana* (the Buddha) as to what sort of person he was. Did the Lord go along with the way of the world; or what way did he go? In teaching the *Sāsana*, how did he teach so that the world was ready and willing to accept and pay homage to him and to follow him in practice right down to the present day in people such as ourselves here. The *Sāsana–Dhamma* which

128. This refers to the self-control of moral behaviour, of action, speech and thought, and the restraint that comes from mindfulness.

he taught continually in all its details is the complete and perfect *'Svākkhāta–Dhamma'* (Supremely Taught Dhamma). It is also the *'Niyyānika–Dhamma'* — the Dhamma which can reduce and eliminates *dukkha,* and anxiety both great and small entirely in anyone who practises properly, following his teaching in a full and complete manner."

"Moreover, you should think deeply and carefully in accordance with the principles of the *Sāsana,* whether someone who turns himself into a wealthy, opulent and famous person who excites the envy of people in the world in this age has more or less *dukkha* and worry both in his heart and body than someone who lives a steady unassuming life, doing what is necessary in accordance with his circumstances. I am not very well educated, but it seems obvious to me that the one who becomes opulent, puffing himself up bigger than the world, is going the right way to kill himself without realising that he is his own executioner."

"When people think of going beyond what is sufficient and reasonable, they are bound to make ever increasing trouble and disturbances for themselves until they cannot find any calm and peace of body or mind. For they always feel uncertain about the future, so that then the heart must think how to increase and inflate their businesses more and more whatever kind of business it may be, until they have no time to rest and take it easy. They are like water which is turbid and muddy and cannot be used for washing or anything else. So their minds and bodies must go round and round like a machine to achieve or get what they set out for. If they cannot, they become anxious and perturbed, because their efforts cannot keep up with their desires, like water flowing over the river banks. When they cannot get what they want by straight and honourable means, they will go in for crooked and dishonourable ways. Whenever they can steal, they steal; whenever they can snatch and grab, they snatch and grab; whenever they can hold up anyone at gunpoint to rob them, they do so; whenever they can cheat, blackmail, hold to ransom, or even kill people, they do so. They have no shame or fear of the world's opinion of them, nor are they afraid of doing evil things and the *Kamma* they make, because they are driven by their overpowering desires. Finally they are caught by the authorities and put away in jail where they experience the results of their own greedy desires. Or else they may be killed before they are caught by the authorities, and thrown away into the jungle or into a swamp and nothing more is heard of them, the body

having disappeared for ever, which is more degraded than an animal and is a sorry and inhuman way to end."

"This is the evil of monkey ways; for they are animals which are always in want and never satisfied with anything, even though their mouths and stomachs are relatively no larger than those of other animals. But monkeys will die for the desire in their hearts rather than from hunger for food, and when anyone takes up those ways which lead to self-destruction, such as those which the monkeys use, whether a Bhikkhu or lay person, they must be abnormal and quite different from normal people in the world who have a sense of what is enough."

"If a Bhikkhu is like this, he will strive to find and get the various requisites of a monk (including money) in all sorts of ways with a restless intent instead of having a sense of shame or an interest in the Dhamma and *Vinaya* which is the good and proper way for one who has gone forth *(Samaṇa).* This is what makes the lay followers and supporters feel disillusioned and fed up, and wherever such a Bhikkhu goes the lay people avoid him, even though they have plenty of faith in Dhamma in their hearts. But they avoid him and keep away from him because they cannot stand the tricky ways of begging and bothering them in asking for money or other things, of this skilled and clever Bhikkhu."

Venerable Ajaan asked the Bhikkhu:

"Do you know what that Bhikkhu was skilled and clever at doing?"

"I don't know," he replied. So Venerable Ajaan told him:

"He was skilled just in asking for things all the time. For if any Bhikkhu becomes extravagantly minded, with many wants and desires and he goes about searching for personal wealth,[129] he will be like this in everything, having no shame in what he is doing. He just has the intention and the fixed aim of getting money, saying: 'Please give me that.' In fact his meditation practice is the repetition of 'Please give me that,' and nothing else. He has no need of reciting the chants or meditating by holding in mind a word or a long saying like all the others who practise meditation. He just has this one

129. *Lābha paccāya:* Literally means: gain or benefit of requisites – the requisites normally meaning, cloth or robes, food, dwelling place, and medicines. But *lābha paccāya* is in fact used as an idiom meaning money or monetary assets.

saying — which has caused enough disturbance in the world already. If he goes on doing this much more it will surely break up the world!"

Venerable Ācariya asked him:

"Do you want that short saying? It will bring you the Path and Fruition easily in a way that none of the *Sāvakas* ever attained to it."

"No I don't want it because it is a saying which destroys both the religion and people."

"If you don't want it, then why are you asking me to behave like a monkey? For this saying is one that has come from nowhere but the monkeys, having been adapted for us in this short saying."

"Please forgive me for putting forward my wrong ideas. I did so because I thought that it would be more convenient and comfortable for Venerable Ajaan without it being harmful to you or to the practice of Dhamma in the *Sāsana.* If I had thought that it was in line with the way of the monkeys which are such careless, conceited animals as Venerable Ajaan has explained, I should not have said anything. Because I had no intention of doing any harm in making this request of Venerable Ajaan."

Venerable Ajaan replied:

"Even though you did not think of going in that direction, yet what you asked me to do pointed quite clearly in that direction."

"There is no need for us to go about asking or telling others to follow suit in everything they do. It is enough for us to see and hear the things which are happening all the time right in front of us, for they are the things that teach us quite well enough for us to be able to hold them in mind as examples. Those things which can make people good, or bad, are to be found almost everywhere and there is no need to go to college to learn how to pick them up. The good things turn those who take them up and practise them into good people who can progress and develop, whereas the bad things lead those who do them to deterioration and ruin, and there is no need to broadcast and advertise this to make people believe that this happens. For example, a person or family which tends to be wasteful and thriftless will also tend

to cause the same characteristics in other members of the family until the whole family becomes wasteful and thriftless. Then whatever income they get is never enough to cover what they spend, because each member of the family has become addicted to spending money in the same way and none of them have any interest in being economical or saving. Even the water in a canal can be dried up when it flows away without stopping."

"Let us compare one family that practises economy and looks after their wealth, spending with reason as their guiding principle against another family who are wasteful and thriftless and have the tendency of spending without restraint; and let us see which one of them has more peace and contentment, and which has more trouble and worry. I can say for sure that, a family which has principles has security. They will have much more contentment and happiness in their own family circle and in their relations with the rest of the world than the family which has a disease for which there is no remedy and no doctor to cure it — in other words, the disease of having no restraint in spending and no ability to save. But quite apart from the happiness and contentment for themselves and their family, there is the question of bringing up their own children and the way they influence other children and people who are associated with them; and how they should turn them into good people who have a good name and restraint in their behaviour and in their use of the requisites of living of all kinds including the care and protection of their various forms of wealth so that it may act as a firm foundation for them for a long time into the future. As for those people and families who have no self-control or moderation in looking after themselves, not only will they be anxious and troubled in the present, but they are likely to influence their children and relatives in the same way, causing disruption and disrepute in their family, relatives and friends, for a long time to come."

"I have never seen anyone who is without a guiding principle in his heart yet who keeps his property and wealth intact and in good order. But I have often seen how such a person goes to loss and ruin; how his debts and mortgages load him down and ruin him until he has nothing left that he can call his own. From where can such a person establish anything to make a well based recovery which people could admire?"

"If people have nothing to force their minds — as well as their bodies and speech — to behave as they should, nor enough restraint to weigh up

the situation when their many emotional impulses *(ārammaṇa)* arise in their minds, as is bound to happen with everyone, they will be quite unable to control themselves and to avoid being submerged by them even though they may be intelligent and highly educated. This is because they have acted in those ways of self-destruction such as I have already mentioned. They are neither good nor praiseworthy and those sages who are truly wise are most careful to avoid them — more so than anything else which may cause them harm, whether from the actions of other people or things. At the same time, such wise people try to maintain themselves in the ways of virtue the whole time, never yielding and letting themselves go in whatever way their impulses and circumstances suggest, unlike those cases which we can see for ourselves who are in a pitiful miserable state, and there are many more of them than there are of people who are worthy of respect and admiration. Even worse are those who like to have various traits of character and then act out their characteristics, making out that these are what they are; keeping up with the latest trends and fashions without ever thinking whether they are of any real value, or whether there is any penalty in doing such things before they do them. Such people just happen to see or hear these things by chance and they are all set ready to grasp them quickly and take them up and act them out, and then to make out that they are big or important or wealthy, whatever accords with their conceit — which is just how the monkeys act. They can write out their own death warrant in full, but there is no doubt that they will only be able to jump a few steps before falling into the chasm followed by a swarm of flies."

"In saying this, I am not doing so for the purpose of blaming the world, or any particular person or group, but I am saying it because it is the truth which may be seen and known clearly with one's eyes and heart within the affairs of us human beings. Nobody can rightly deny that if anyone acts and behaves in the way I have described, they will go to ruin and it's a one way street; in other words, they have signed their own receipt and their own death warrant, even while they still talk big, bragging about how clever and well informed they are, what a good background they come from with plenty of money, counted in millions which they have made for themselves — although nobody knows where it could have come from. But their destruction takes place so easily — like someone who keeps untold wealth in his own house; it only needs his house to catch fire for all of it to be destroyed within one or two hours and all he has left is a lot of ashes."

"I have endeavoured to learn and practise the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha from the time I was ordained up to the present time — which is many years now and the more I have learned and practised this way, the more I have come to see my own stupidity. Instead of becoming clever and gaining strange and unusual knowledge to contradict the Dhamma of the Lord, saying that it is untrue, that it is not well taught Dhamma *(Svākkhāta–Dhamma)* and not the 'Dhamma which leads to liberation' *(Niyyānika–Dhamma)* as it is claimed in some texts and by some people, whatever the level of Dhamma and in whatever aspect, the more I have practised it the more faith I have gained in it, causing me to accept it all completely. I have no knowledge which makes me feel confident that I could boast and say that I can contradict the Dhamma of the Lord. In every part of all of the books of the *Ti–Piṭaka* there is nothing but the Lord giving teaching about the stupidity of people and other beings who make the boast that they are so skilled and clever in what they know, yet they cannot even compete with a frightened monkey which is looking for a way to hide from people. If you say that people such as ourselves are more clever than the monkeys, we must know what things are dangerous and harmful to us and keep away from them and diminish their hold over us, and we must not be reckless and over self-confident about these things. Wherever I look I see only people bragging about how clever they are at doing evil things which are harmful both to themselves and everyone else. Nobody seems to be clever and wise enough to be able to avoid and get away from these blameworthy things so as not to become intimate with them and to turn them into close companions all the time by day and night and in all activities. For this makes them become ever more firmly embedded so that they will never be able to get away from them enough to look into their hearts and see Dhamma there, which can then flow out into bodily actions and speech to give them some peace."

"Have you ever thought about how subtle and profound is the Dhamma teaching *(Sāsana–Dhamma)* of the Lord Buddha? As far as most of us are concerned, we can only use our hearts which are full of dirty, filthy *kilesas* to fathom out the Dhamma of the Lord and all we get is blaming and criticism arising within us, saying: 'Dhamma is difficult to practise and those who practise Dhamma must go against the way of the world if they are going to practise at all. The Lord Buddha taught Dhamma but it seems to me that it does not accord with the true nature of the world. For the teaching says that, if one does good one gets good, if one does evil one gets evil — but

I have done good until I have almost died, yet I don't see any good from it at all. But there are plenty of other people who don't seem to have done good in any way, yet they are rich millionaires with vast wealth who have gone far beyond me while I have been doing good all the time. So I don't see how the Dhamma can be true as it has been taught. And again, if there is any truth in it about evil, why does it appear that those who do evil seem to get away with it, whereas in times of necessity, those who have done good don't seem to be helped by the merit they have made. So there are probably no such things as good and evil, nor hell, heaven and *Nibbāna,* for if there are, where are they? Those people who have died, both good and evil, just disappear and never seem to come back to tell us about it. Or, to let us know enough so that we may feel confident and desire to make merit, to give *dāna,* to guard our morality and to practise some meditation, so that when we die we can all go to heaven and *Nibbāna*'."

"These are the kind of things which are attached to our hearts and which arise when we try to penetrate the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha because the 'world' likes this kind of thing. But, doing it in this way there is no hope of acquiring and firmly establishing those good things which are portrayed in Dhamma — because the *kilesas* don't care for Dhamma — they just care for the *kilesas* and nothing else. So all that is acquired is more filthy *kilesas.*"

"The Dhamma was never taught for those people who are just waiting ready to contradict and destroy Dhamma by using various kinds of thoughts and views. But it was taught for those people who search for the proof of the truth as derived from the true Dhamma. Therefore it is not the Dhamma of complaining, of guesswork or speculation, like that of most of us who look deeply into Dhamma with a heart that is unclean; and then reach down and draw up a lot of filth which we sniff at and lay the blame on Dhamma with a lack of sincerity. After which the heart, based on that ground says: 'I can think and speak quite freely.' But it doesn't know that the odour which it smells is its own filth and there isn't any Dhamma which they can blame anywhere near it. However much people blame and find fault with Dhamma causes no disturbance to Dhamma at all. All that happens is that they will get back a lot of disturbance in themselves which comes from their own thoughts and speech, even as they think with self-satisfaction how: 'We are privileged because we can dispute and criticise Dhamma with a clear conscience.' "

"Dhamma is very precise and subtle and it is difficult for those hearts which have *kilesas* such as ours and yours to penetrate and reach it, as we have already explained above. Therefore although your intention was good in making this request of me, it also brought up an important aspect of Dhamma concealed within it. For thriftiness, economy, contentment and satisfaction with little are all factors of mind *(dhammā)* which mean the same thing as, being careful and not forgetting oneself. And those who practise these Dhammas are sure to be able to conduct and look after themselves in a way that is admirable, regardless of whether they are ordained members of the *Sangha* or lay people. A Bhikkhu, even though he has the greatest of good fortune with large numbers of people who have faith in him and praise him — or alternatively, a lay person who is more or less wealthy, if they are not full of pride and vanity nor easily forget themselves in their good fortune, they can still turn their external wealth to good use in a way that depends on the basic nature of this wealth. Then it can promote the happiness and contentment of the owner as well as bringing honours to him. His wealth thus acts like a true friend who is always there, ready to stand by him in times of suffering and great necessity. It does not then become an enemy, an agent which harms him and spoils him, which is so often the case amongst those who are careless and thoughtless and never mend their ways enough to have some peace, calm and gracefulness. Those who are under the influence of these Dhamma virtues and have them as part of their natures are the kind of people who are looked upon as being gracious and dignified by all normal people. They differ greatly from those who like to put on contrived airs and display fashions and fancies that excite the *kilesas* making normal people feel dizzy and off balance when they see them. As for those people who do these things, they think that they are beautiful and splendid like *Devatās* up in the sky and undoubtedly superior to all others! But when normal people see them they just get a headache and feel upset and off balance."

"You should think about these two forms of behaviour by comparing them so as to get to know them. In what ways do they differ from each other? Compare these two opposing Dhammas with what I have already talked about above, and to make it clear I shall give a brief explanation of what is meant by 'being provident', 'being economical', 'being contented *(santosa)*' and 'wanting of little'; please listen carefully."

"Providence, or being provident means that a person takes an interest in and looks after all his valuable and useful possessions, not letting them go to rack and ruin due to a careless lack of interest, and not acting like a wasteful spendthrift. When he makes use of them he is careful not to spoil them when there is no need for it, so that they are not wasted; for each one of these things, whatever its nature, has come to him by working for it, or by searching for it. It didn't come on its own such that he can afford to look on it as being of little value."

"Being economical is what comes from the heart of a person who is fond of and pays attention to the things he uses, and who looks after those things which are of value to him by being careful with them. He doesn't use them and then throw them down anywhere in a careless manner, but puts them away carefully and properly after having used them. He is not extravagant in his living and spending, yet he does not make out that he is hard up while he still has enough goods and wealth to live reasonably well. Nor does he forget himself when he has plenty of wealth, but he tries to turn that wealth to good advantage in whatever way is suitable according to the nature of his wealth. He is not miserly and tight-fisted but gives support and charity in the same way as others do. Or, maybe he gives a lot more when there is a valid reason for it, because the practice of being provident and economical are the ways of behaviour *(dhammā)* of those wise ones who always act with reason in regard to themselves and all those things which they become associated with everywhere round about them. Therefore, such a person who is provident and economical does not tend to go in any direction which would make him open to blame or criticism, but instead, his way of doing things brings him nothing but praise and admiration."

"A person who is provident and economical is also one who looks carefully at all aspects of social intercourse, business and whatever else he deals with. He is not easily caught out by enticing things which enter the doors of the senses and stir up the *kilesas* and he practises self-restraint and patience with the changing, unstable underlying falsehoods in the world of society, by means of shrewd judgement *(vicāraṇā–ñāṇa).* He does not easily get excited about false, deceptive and scary things which catch the attention, but he is well contented *(santosa)* and satisfied with whatever wealth he has and does not like going about wild with excitement, jumping into this and colliding with that, under the influence of a heart that is brim full of *rāga taṇhā*[130] — but he acts towards everything in an even handed, consistent way."

130. *Rāga–taṇhā;* Sexual craving. This is the primary motive behind most forms of wild behaviour and aggression.

"I will give you examples from lay life to illustrate the value of those principles of Dhamma and how necessary they are to the hearts of people in the world. Thus, people who are married have each other as a constant and valuable possession, and they should be glad and contented with it; not letting their minds go wild, jumping about all over the place and wandering out to fall in love with other peoples husbands and wives or other people down the street in disregard of the Dhamma of contentment. In other words, being husband and wife to each other respectively is a long standing and valuable possession that both of them have. So even though they may be attracted to others to some extent which is the characteristic way of ordinary people *(puthujjana),* who like to pick on anything as it suits their fancy and are never satisfied, the Dhamma of contentment must firmly force them to withstand these parasitic emotional attractions *(ārammaṇa)* all the time. It must not allow their minds and bodies to go out to such things, bringing them "home" so that they get involved in their valuable and long standing possessions. For these things will become enemies in their town, their home or between husband and wife, causing the break up of their family and the dissipation of their valuable possessions until all is lost. Close friends will become strangers and the happiness which overshadowed them due to the Dhamma of contentment which was protecting them will break up and dissolve into nothing."

"In order that the Dhamma of contentment shall be fundamental in one's life and heart, one must not be interested or concerned with anything other than one's own existing possessions which belong to one. For even though there is greater wealth out there which does not belong to one, one should not make it any concern of one's own, for one has got rid of most of the greed and covetousness that wants to get what belongs to others. Then oneself and one's family will be happy throughout and there will be no break up in one's family because they all gladly accept the limiting bounds within which they live. Husband, wife and their children will also have some peace and happiness and a feeling of confidence in each other without having any doubts or suspicions to cause trouble. They will feel quite confident that their possessions and things of value are truly their own without any of them being like parasites which go about twisting and altering everything. For there will just be their whole family unit and their possessions will be entirely their own, so that each and all of them will feel well disposed and peaceful because the Dhamma of contentment protects and looks after the

stability of oneself and one's family, so that they may have value and worth in their hearts."

"As for 'wanting of little', this is a form of Dhamma which is much more subtle than 'contentment'. But both of them are a pair of Dhamma factors which should grace each family and young men and women in particular who should keep their behaviour within the bounds of what is proper. In other words, a young man and woman who love each other should keep it that way without having any others hanging on in their hearts which can cause their marriage partner to feel upset, slighted and inferior, with thoughts such as: 'Let him or her go to that other one, I don't see any point keeping this up, for it will only be a tiresome lot of trouble to remain faithful any longer.' For when two people love each other, it must remain 'each other', without involving a third party, whether man or woman, and they must remain faithful to each other from when they first come together, right through to the end of their lives without getting excited about anyone but their own partner. Each of them only loves the one person and their hearts should be joined together in harmony to the end of their lives. Any others who just wait to break up their close relationship, they look upon as being parasites. If two people truly live together as husband and wife to each other and that is all, even though a *Devatā,* an Angel, should come along, they would not become intimate with it, because it is not theirs and not what they truly value, for they only feel happy and confident with each other. Anything more than this is not — 'being satisfied with little' — amongst those who want peace and happiness in their family, which both husband and wife can view with full confidence."

"When we have considered the meaning of being provident, of economy, of contentment, and wanting little, we should also consider their opposites for comparison. Then we shall see the full significance of both sides and how valuable and worthy or baneful and disreputable they are, respectively. Then, anyone who values reason and truth may be led to examine them, and choose, and practise whichever of them he finds suitable."

"Thus, conceit, pride and vanity in goods and emotional attachments; being wasteful and extravagant; having one, then thinking that one would like to have two, then three..., not being satisfied in what one has already got; and wanting plenty in everything; all of this is an enemy to oneself and others, and all of these things are enemies of Dhamma. Going in opposi-

tion to Dhamma, such as being improvident, is a way which leads only to deterioration and loss. Even if someone wants peace, happiness and development, they are not likely to get it by destroying Dhamma in this way, simply because it is the wrong way. With either a Bhikkhu or a lay person, if they go the wrong way it is bound to lead them to deterioration and distress. Because Dhamma is the 'centre line' of the road along which one must go for gain and increase. This is true both for those who are ordained as well as lay people, and even though there are some differences between the two, they are not much and generally speaking these things, such as 'being satisfied and wanting little', are the same for all. It is just that Bhikkhus go the ways of Bhikkhus and lay people act in the ways of lay people. In both cases the results should be those of peace and happiness which accord with the causes, or actions, which people do."

"The *Sāvakas*, in the time of the Lord Buddha, who are *'Sanghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi'* — our Refuge — in most cases practised the way of contentment with what they had got and satisfaction with little. Their fear and concern about privations, difficulties and survival was much less than their fear of not knowing and seeing Dhamma. Because they were afraid that they may not come to know and see Dhamma, they tried hard to make the greatest efforts and put everything they had got into their striving to know and to see — and therefore they came to know and to see Dhamma to their hearts content."

"But as for ourselves, we are only afraid of poverty and privations, afraid that it will be difficult and tormenting, and afraid that we may die. If anything is lacking we cant stand it, we feel depressed, deficient and sorry, and we can't get down to making the effort to practise the way. In our hearts there is nothing but *kilesas* and the fear of death all the time and everywhere, and Dhamma cannot get down into this state because the *kilesas* bar the way and there is no path for it to penetrate and get in."

"Wherever we go or stay, if there are lay people, relatives and friends who come round with faith, followed up by large food carriers and many dishes of food with plenty of sweet and savoury things, our hearts are happy and contented because they are made fresh and cool by food. We smile and applaud with contentment, saying: 'The atmosphere is very good here, it is fine and clear and has a good feel about it, so my meditation practice goes well and comfortably without my having to force it against the grain,

and I am steadily becoming more and more calm.' But what is the truth? Is his meditation really going well or is he finding comfort in lying down and sleeping? It is not easy to be sure for a Bhikkhu who likes this kind of 'atmosphere'. Because being able to eat a lot, lying down and sleeping well and much, all go together as inseparable states. I once did this sort of thing so I know about it well. If one then goes to a place which is really suitable for meditation, due to its being free from disturbing things, but lacking in 'atmosphere' — meaning little food because there are no large food carriers walking behind, then one's 'atmospheric' mood finds it difficult, one can't put up with it, one complains to the lay people saying: 'Oh how difficult the 'atmosphere' in this place is, I cannot stand it here, its too oppressive and I can't breath freely, so I cant get calm in meditation and my heart *(citta)* is difficult to control. This is quite different from what I am used to and I cannot stand this atmosphere which is so heavy and oppressive and I must say farewell to you good lay people and leave today.' So one gets out quickly to find a place where the 'atmosphere' is good and suitable so that one can do one's meditation practice. There, what do you think of that! What do you think of a *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* whose meditation is influenced by the 'atmosphere' and whose *citta* goes down into calm when the 'atmosphere' is good? But as soon as the food carriers are not immediately evident, the 'atmosphere' becomes oppressive and his *citta* will not become calm in meditation. Supposing that all sorts of things become deficient or unavailable all together, what will the 'atmosphere' be like then? I think he would soon die because there wouldn't be any 'atmosphere' left to breathe; but what do you think about this *'kammaṭṭhāna atmosphere',* do you like it? I think its remarkable!"

"If you want to see the real *Tathāgata* and the real *Arahants* in a way that is quite clear and obvious to your heart, without any restriction and limitation due to time and place, you must look into and examine these questions of deficiency and lack, as well as plenty, of all those things you need and use, so as to see that such conditions are normal. And to see that you should depend on these things only to the extent that they are an aid in penetrating and reaching the intended purpose. But you should not be emotionally involved *(ārammaṇa)* with any of them more than you are with Dhamma — which is the intended purpose, the goal of your endeavours. Contentment and the wanting of little is the way that all the Noble followers

of the Buddha went. Whereas extravagance and wanting plenty is the way of the *'Atmosphere Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus'* which I have described above, and they will never be able to get free from *dukkha* while their hearts are firmly attached to those things."

"Eliminating anxiety and worry for those things of various kinds which we are associated with, is for the purpose of weakening the emotional attachments (*ārammaṇa*) for them, which are *kilesas,* each of its own kind. Anyone who has not yet seen the value of Dhamma in the form of contentment and wanting little, and other such things, has still not seen the value of Dhamma enough to want to scramble up with determination, patience and forbearance. Instead he will be anxious about his mouth and stomach, afraid of having to put up with difficulties and afraid that these things will lead to his death. Finally he will end up inundated with concern about his mouth and stomach which have always been causing him anxiety. If in doing the practice of Dhamma, we are not prepared to let go of our emotional attachments *(ārammaṇa)* to these things, there is no way for us to get free from all the *kilesas.* Because all these things which we have been talking about are the means by which the *kilesas* tie us up. You should realise that concern for such things is what inundates those who practise the way, by means of attachment and longing, until they reach a point where they cannot get themselves out of it. Or else, they may not realise that the *kilesas* are strong enough within them so that they should be concerned about getting rid of them, enough to make them go out to a suitable place to enable them to get rid of some of these *kilesas* which are bearing down on their hearts. But instead, they become possessive of those *kilesas,* afraid that if they vanish from their hearts it will leave nothing to bring them any fun, nothing to 'scratch'.[131] They are therefore bound to remain involved in a mess with these things."

"Thinking and speaking of these things makes me feel very sorry and disheartened at the manner in which we who practise the way do not see freedom from *dukkha,* which is Dhamma, as being more valuable than the *kilesas* which have always been tormenting our hearts. For we think anxiously about our mouths and stomachs as being more important than letting go for the sake of freedom. But those who delight in Dhamma and see how resolute and courageous the *Ācariya* is in his practice, feel ever more inclined to strive

131. This in reference to one of the Buddha's similes in which a man is beset with sores, yet finds pleasure in scratching them.

with determination in their own practice. This is as it should be for those who have come to learn and train for the purpose of Dhamma and its meaning, and for truly getting free from and dispersing the *kilesas* and the load of *dukkha* from their hearts. Such a Bhikkhu may think: 'He (the *Ācariya*) is a person; I am a person. He has a heart; so have I. He can put up with these difficulties; so can I. He has reached a high state; I shall endeavour to reach it also without retreating and giving way to let the *kilesas* laugh and mock at me. He has attained freedom; I shall also go on trying to gain freedom, by following him, until I do so, for his *kilesas* were just in his heart in the same way as mine are, and they are not a heap which is piling up and increasing before and behind me like a mountain or a jungle.' I am quite certain that someone who has strong interest and intention to follow the training and do the practice for himself and for true Dhamma in the foregoing manner, is bound to be able to attain freedom one day sooner or later, for sure."

"The way I act in regard to my requisites and other things of various sorts, such as patching and darning, or adapting things to make use of them and repairing things as necessary, is because I have seen the value of having these mental attitudes *(dhammā)* as habitual characteristics. And because I am anxious for my friends in Dhamma and followers, that they may otherwise not have any way of practice left in the future. For in this age the tendency is to practise *kammaṭṭhāna* in lazy, easy, self-indulgent ways. They tend to do everything in such a manner that — once the food is cooked they immediately eat the lot, and spoil everything. In other words, as soon as the food is about cooked it is all eaten up by their mouths, stomachs and the fire all together, without leaving anything over for tomorrow. (The meaning here is that, as soon as they leave the meditation practice there is no Dhamma value left, such as calm and peace. It is all blown away completely, by emotional attachments — *ārammaṇa*)."[132]

"I believe quite firmly that those things which I do are in accordance with the Noble *(Ariya)* actions and Noble customs which they have always practised. Because they are actions which are done with an awareness of danger, without forgetting oneself. They are not done in the manner of the monkeys who eat something, then throw it away and look around for something new with no thought for that which they had before as to whether there is still some of it left which is good to eat as food. People who are rather mad in their excitement with the latest fads, fashions and fancies

132. The brackets and the text within them is from the Thai text and are not inserted by the translator.

are like this. How can they ever have any basic principles in their hearts to give them guidance to look after their possessions and wealth. Their shirts, trousers and other clothing, they wear once or twice and then throw them away saying: 'These are too old to wear, they are out of date and not in fashion now.' After which they go looking for new ones, as if money flowed into their pockets of itself, like the water in the ocean."

"They never think how even though they get the most expensive and special things to wear, to decorate and display themselves, they still remain a person — the same person as the one who is presently so full of vanity. From where will they get anything of supreme and undying *(sāra)* value? As for putting on those decorative clothes, what matters is that they remain the same person as they were before. Their characters, whether good or bad remain virtually unchanged — unless, that is, they change themselves with those practices which bring them virtue and value by doing them. Because the virtue and value in people is dependent only on their knowledge, skill and behaviour and there is nothing at all in their dress and decoration to delude and hypnotise them so that they forget themselves in their excitement. Unless that is, they do it to deceive other people whose sight is dim and deluded, like rabbits that are frightened by a loud noise and run away until their legs almost break. But I cannot see that there is anything praiseworthy in it so that one may say: 'Their virtue and value has increased at all by wearing those expensive clothes and opulent things which they keep changing several times a day.' "

"What in fact such people inescapably get from doing this sort of thing is damage to their own character, bad habits, as well as a 'leaking heart',[133] a heart without principles or basis, and they can never be themselves as they truly are with a good set of guiding principles. This leads them to create their own destruction as well as that of their society and future generations who pick up the same deluded ways, perpetuating them into the future. This is the evil result which is sure to come from doing such things; but those who act in this way are bound to see it for themselves. There is no need to have a committee to judge and to decide to make it difficult for them, as they do when there is a conflict of interests, for they will know what things are evil, and what are good. They will also know the meaning

133. "A leaky heart": The heart or *citta* is thought of as a vessel for holding Dhamma. If the heart is also harbouring evil things which are contrary to Dhamma, it is said that the Dhamma leaks away. The heart is then not a tight vessel.

of *dukkha* and *sukha,* and all this they will know in themselves, and there is no need for anyone to tell them."

"This is like the practice of Dhamma, for those who have already done the practice and gained satisfactory results from it, and teach and point out the right way for those who follow. But if their followers look for trouble, saying that the way is difficult, too old fashioned and out of date, and they have no confidence in following their teacher, nor in doing the practice with full commitment of heart, then the way is blocked — like a dead person who knows no good or evil, no happiness or sorrow at all. In the next stage, when such people become teachers, their pupils will behave like monkeys without any restraint or rules of behaviour to give them some discipline. Whatever they want to do they will be free to do and to follow the ways of animals, which know no language. But we are people and Bhikkhus, and we cannot stay in the same world if they act like this, so they will have to be driven out to live in a charnel ground with the dead, or to live in the jungles with the monkeys and apes. But they are not likely to consent to this because they consider that they are people who are still alive and not yet dead, that they are human and not monkeys and so cannot live in such places. In the end they become people who are always contentious and discordant both in the world and Dhamma, and they make themselves objectionable and disliked by society as well as causing a lot of concern and trouble."

"The manner of practising Dhamma in which they do a bit here and a bit there without ever getting down to it properly is what obstructs and hinders the field of practice. Then they become *'kammaṭṭhāna parasites'* in the field of practice, hidden amongst the others who are their companions and who are fully committed and determined to do the practice properly. These parasites do not want to go away from the others to let them get free from their (parasites) dirty stinking mud, because there are people who come to visit them, wanting to ask and learn about Dhamma and these parasites can then talk to them, boastfully claiming that they are *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* in the line of Venerable Ajaan Mun and Venerable Ajaan Sao. Then they trade on the names of their teacher and the *Ācariyas,* making use of them continually. They stink worse than rotting fish in the market."

"In saying this, I am not blaming you, nor saying what kind of *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* you are. But I must point out any cases of moral teaching which are appropriate to my companions and those who have accepted me as their

Ācariya, so that they may know the way to avoid and evade such issues and how to choose ways of action which are entirely good and appropriate. The result will then be for all of you to some extent."

"I am getting very old now and I am concerned as to how my followers in Dhamma will keep up the tradition of doing things in the way that I have taught them. As for that question which you asked me, there was nothing wrong with it so far as the relationship of teacher and pupil is concerned. Because our welfare is interrelated, and when one sees one's teacher do things which one is afraid may make difficulties for him, out of respect, affection and complete trust in him in all things, one wants to make it more easy and convenient for him. So one talks about it with him with the intention and hope that it will bring benefit to him. Therefore I don't look on it as being wrong in any way that you asked me to do those things. But, in order to uphold the Aryan tradition so that it may remain harmonious, undisturbed and fully satisfying in the future, both for ourselves and for those who follow as in future generations, so that they may take up what we do as a basis to be followed in practice, I respectfully ask my companions in Dhamma to commit yourselves to the practices of being provident, being economical, being contented and satisfied with little, and doing it with sincerity in regard to all your requisites to maintain the tradition and to be someone who goes the way of practice smoothly and consistently. Then all the *kilesas* and their tricks will not create unreasonable amounts of trouble for you, because you will have the *Dhutanga* practices to counter them and weaken them constantly. These four articles of Dhamma are very important in the field of practice and I ask you to please realise this in your hearts."

"As long as someone has these four Dhammas in his heart, he will be calm and at peace both in his heart and in his outward activities, and no stain or blemish will become attached to him while this is so. Then wherever he goes or stays he will be happy, his body, speech and heart being calm and peaceful and no danger to anyone. The external activities and behaviour of a Bhikkhu who has these Dhammas in his heart is pleasant to see, inducing peace in the hearts of his companions, and other people of all classes as well as the *Devatās, Indra, Brahmas,* the *Nāgas* and *Garuḍas* and all the rest. So all of you should please take good note of these things in your hearts and endeavour to practise them so that you will gain the results of them. But you must never weaken or give up these Dhammas which are at the heart

of all the Venerable Ariya Bhikkhus, for they cherish them and constantly uphold them in their lives and hearts. As for other, ordinary people, they may have different ideas and understandings. Therefore, in order to be exactly right and certain, you must take hold of the saying: *Sanghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi* (I take refuge in the *Sangha*), and make it firm and strong in your hearts, for those four Dhammas, and the '*Sangha* refuge', are of equal value and importance."

The question and request of that Bhikkhu for Venerable Ajaan to give way and take it more easily, turned into a long and fiery Dhamma talk. His way of teaching Dhamma is very difficult for anyone else to equal. For all his skilful ways of fiery criticism and mild, moderate talk were all of essential importance to those who were listening intently with open hearts. None of the Bhikkhus who were sitting listening to him ever thought or said that Venerable Ajaan spoke in a fiery, angry manner by bringing up the *kilesas* as an emotional support *(ārammaṇa),* or even that they were used as the means of producing such talk. In fact, they all spoke in the same way, saying how:

"This talk of Venerable Ajaan today went right to my heart in the most direct way. This is how it ought to be! When he is calm and not roused up one can never hear a talk like this. Only when someone makes a request of Venerable Ajaan as in this case, does he seem to give a talk which is to me a joy to hear with the fine flavour of truth. If anyone has anything to ask the teacher, he should not remain quiet, for he rarely gives such a talk as this which was so good to hear."

After Venerable Ajaan's *desanā* the Bhikkhus gathered in small groups and talked together like this, as they usually did after a talk on Dhamma. In fact this was quite true, for if nobody said anything or asked any questions which he could use, he would give a normal Dhamma talk, but even though it concerned the higher aspects of Dhamma, it lacked the fire and force of those occasions when he had a question or incident to act as the focus of his talk. I used to like listening to this kind of talk, which went right home to the heart. Because my nature was always rather coarse and unsubtle, and if I was not "hit hard" by it, some of the Dhamma would never reach my heart, and even though it was very high, my heart rarely picked up much in the way of useful teachings as it would in a talk such as the foregoing one.

The Size of the Almsbowl

Amongst the Bhikkhus in Thailand the bowl is considered to be an important requisite which no Buddhist Monk should be without. In fact it is always considered to be an essential requisite from the day of their ordination right to the end of their life in the *Sangha*.

But there are many types of bowls and many sizes as well, within the limitations specified in the *Vinaya* rules. In particular, amongst those Bhikkhus who follow in the line of Venerable Ajaan Mun it is generally thought that the bowl should be of medium to large size. This comes from the way in which they like to go wandering as ascetics in the forests and mountains as it suits their inclination, for they do not like staying fixed in any one place outside the rainy season *(vassa).* When they go wandering, they walk barefoot, and go wherever they feel inclined, and those requisites which are necessary they have to carry along with them, but they do not take much. What they carry generally consists of the bowl, the three robes *(saṅghāṭi, cīvara* and *sabong)*, a bathing cloth, an umbrella tent (klod), a mosquito net, a kettle of water, a water filter, a razor, sandals, some small candles, and a candle lantern which is made of a piece of white cloth, sewn up to form a tube and two circular pieces made of metal, the top one being an open ring. A candle is then mounted on the bottom end and when lit, it gives light for walking *caṅkama* at night and for going anywhere round about the place where they are staying. So it acts in place of the more usual types of lantern.

When they are wandering about they keep many of the requisites in the bowl, such as, the outer robe *(saṅghāṭi),* the mosquito net, the razor, the candle lantern and candles. Therefore the bowls which the *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* use tend to be much larger than those which are normally used in order to accommodate these requisites and to carry them along conveniently when they go from place to place. For once they have filled up the bowl, nearly all their requisites are taken care of and they can sling it over one shoulder and set off walking, with their umbrella tent and a small handbag on the other shoulder. The bowl is heavy, and for those who are not used to it, it may be very difficult or even more than they can stand. But being a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* is rather like being a warrior in a war who must just put up with whatever conditions he has to face.

A fairly big bowl is also more convenient to eat from because all the food is put together in the bowl. The rice, savoury and sweet things are all there

in one bowl and they have no plates, dishes, spoons or forks. Once they have finished eating, they wash and dry the bowl, making it clean and free from smell. In washing the bowl it is necessary to do it at least three times with fresh water each time. Then after it has been wiped dry, if the sun is out, it is put out to dry completely for a short while before being put away in a suitable place, depending on circumstances; but if the weather is clear, the bowl may be left with the lid off to get rid of any lingering smell that it may have.

The *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* look after their bowls very carefully. If someone offers to wash and wipe out their bowl, they are reluctant to let them do so if they have never done it before. Because they are afraid of the bowl getting rusty, afraid that it may be put down in a place where it is not safe, afraid that it may knock against hard objects, or that it may drop and hit something hard which may damage or dent it so that rust will start forming there before long. When this happens and rust forms, the whole bowl has to be rubbed down with abrasive stones and emery paper to remove all the black iron oxide both inside and outside until the metal is clean. Then it must be re-oxidised by heating it in a fire and the fire must be replenished five times to accord with the *Vinaya* rules, after which it may be used. All this means a lot of trouble and hard work, so the Bhikkhus look after their bowls more carefully than any other requisites and they are reluctant to let other people handle them.

When returning from *piṇḍapāta,* people sometimes go and ask the Bhikkhus for their bowls, to carry them back for them. But if they feel uncertain about the person who asks, whether he has ever had any experience in looking after a bowl, they will probably refuse politely, giving some reason or excuse for doing so. They will not readily hand their bowl to anyone until they had taught them how and where to put the bowl down, how to wash it clean and wipe it, and how to look after it generally until that person understands. Then he would be allowed to handle the bowl.

How "Modern Bhikkhus" Want to Change the Rules

Latter is the customary way of looking after the bowl for those *kammaṭṭhāna* monks who follow in line from Venerable Ajaan Mun. But the world goes the way of change *(anicca),* so nowadays it is uncertain whether the Dhamma and *Vinaya* may be altered or changed and made to go the way of *anicca* in some

aspects, or not. From what we have already seen, there is enough cause for concern in some of the external things which are little by little, infiltrating into the sphere of those who practise the way. They are gradually increasing all the time, until they have almost reached the stage where those who practise the way properly and whose hearts are intent on Dhamma will have to move elsewhere because they will not be able to stand it any longer — due to those things which are offensive in their sight and upsetting to their hearts which they would otherwise have to put up with. The decorum of those who practise has already begun to change in the direction of things such as those which we have already mentioned — which is an indication of their nature, their fascination and the peculiar excitement which they arouse in those monks and ourselves. We should have no difficulty in guessing what is the nature of these things! If we do not come to our senses and get back to our original principles, which are the Dhamma, the *Vinaya* and all the *Dhutanga* observances which act like protective armour that the Teachers and *Ācariyas* have brought to us, there is reason to fear that we may become *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* of the "space age" who move so fast, nobody can keep up with them because their speed is so much faster than those who have brought them up.

This is not meant to be a criticism of those Bhikkhus who practise well and properly. But it is said with real concern for the Dhamma, *Vinaya,* and *Dhutanga* observances which are done by those of us Bhikkhus who like to change things to suit their fancy, for this sort of thing will draw them down into the "market of self-indulgence". For in this age there are easy, facile, ways of learning, and we *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* may want to go fast and we may learn and practise in ways that are quick and expedient and which are far more expedient than the ways of the Great Teacher, or our own Teachers who have brought us up in the ways of practice. Such expediency is like expecting to get results from doing little or nothing; in the end it just leads to hopelessness and delusion. So this lesson in Dhamma is presented in the hope that it will help all of us *Dhutanga Bhikkhus* to examine all those things in which the heart is indulgent and which are at present creeping in and hiding in the quiet corners of our "monasteries, huts and robes"; and in the hope that by showing them up they will become separated from us, driven out and kept at bay. Then they will never have an opportunity to get together, gain strength and break up our circle of *kammaṭṭhāna,* causing its destruction much sooner than it would happen naturally.

However, if we who practise the way are engrossed in external things, much more than inwardly (within ourselves) by making a comparison between ourselves and the principles of Dhamma and *Vinaya,* it is bound to lead to forgetfulness of "self" so that the way is opened for all sorts of bad, evil and vicious things to creep in and establish a much more disorderly sanctuary (Wat) than was there before. Thereby setting up a "self" within us which is much more obstinate than the one which was originally there, which used to have Dhamma in its heart. Then this new sets about burying it completely until nothing at all can be seen of what used to be there. What used to be Dhamma changes and becomes the ways of the world; what used to be a clever person changes into a stupid person; what used to be a person with mindfulness becomes intoxicated. One who used to be in full control and command of himself becomes a servant with an inferior status, and these changes take place in one and the same person due to the influence of emotional feeling and thought. The body and speech which used to be instruments for doing good, change and become instruments of self-destruction leading to complete and utter ruin, leaving no part — nothing — which could be developed to bring him back and change him into a worthy and consistent person again. This is what happens if the heart changes its state, for then thought and understanding also become different.

Therefore, those who practise the way should prepare themselves to receive their supreme inheritance, to the utmost of their ability in their way of practice. Even if they face the loss of their lives, they must not give up those ways[134] in which they have been accustomed to acting as a warrior. And when they actually reach the end of their lives, because they have been fighting all kinds of *kilesas* with ascetic practices that are forceful and patient in the face of difficulties, their expectation is that they will reach their end in that last minute still fighting in the midst of the battle. The bodies of those who die in this war against the *kilesas* will not be stinking, rotten, loathsome corpses which frighten people, but they will be fragrant with a fragrance that diffuses abroad reaching all the directions, as well as above and below. And they will become a centre of attraction drawing the hearts of all people, *Devatās, Indra* and *Brahmas,* making them feel a satisfaction which causes them to smile joyfully with pleasure and arouses a desire in them to want to meet, see and

134. Literal translation: "their stripes", meaning like the tiger which only loses its stripes (and its nature) when it dies.

pay homage to them and to worship their remains as the highest ideal to be constantly recalled and never forgotten away. In the same way as the Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* and *Ācariyas* who reached *Nibbāna,* are the highest ideals which we uphold and bring to mind with homage and veneration. Their relics, bones and ashes are never looked upon as objects of loathing, disgust or fear, but instead, people have the hope and strong faith that such relics or bone remains may come into their possession, so that they may pay homage to them and hold them in the highest veneration, and to bring them to mind every morning and evening and at all other times whatever they may be doing. They do this that they may receive well being and blessings on themselves, their environment and their homes, and also for security, to avoid all dangers that may threaten their lives and bodies. For these are things of value which are held in the highest regard and cherished in all three realms of the Universe.

Therefore, the life and self-nature of those who practise the way should be full of courage and ability in fighting against and chopping down all the various kinds of obstacles, which their *kilesa*–natures build up as thick, strong barriers against them, until they manage to break through them. I implore all of you to be like this, even as that Bhikkhu who is our Great *Ācariya,* who went along this path and gained victory and came back to the world. He gained freedom; the *Sāsana* then followed, arising and becoming prominent; the world then followed and flourished, because the hearts of the good people were imbued with Dhamma and they waited for an opportunity to give reverence and pay homage. There are still many people like this who become attached to and dependent on those Bhikkhus who lead the way with courage and who act rightly and properly as leaders with ease and elegant skilfulness. The world still has a great hunger for virtue and for truly good people, a hunger which is almost insatiable. But although they may not be able to change their own ways to create an aura of virtue in their minds and bodies, to be a refuge for their hearts, they still want to see those who practise the way and who are worthy of respect and faith, worthy of getting close to and intimate with their Dhamma. They want to pay respect to them, to venerate them, to look up to them as their ideal without getting satiated. For, in spite of the fact that the world is in a state of confusion and turmoil, whirling about in the evil ways of mankind as it has been for such a long time that people have almost given up hope of being able to search for a way out, yet hope still arises whenever they see anything that seems worth picking up, and they want to pick it up.

They see that it is worth grasping, so they want to grasp it. They see that it is worth depending on, so they want to depend on it without ever getting bored or satiated with it — because the experience of happiness is the same everywhere throughout the world. Therefore the practice which is for the sake of one's own heart, "leading in the right way" *(supaṭipatti),* is also right for the hearts of all those in the world who follow in the future.

In this, the Lord Buddha went the way before us. At that time, when the Lord trained and disciplined himself, he was never anxious or concerned with thoughts in his heart as to who he was doing this for. He even made the effort to let go of the Princess, his wife, who was like his own heart to him, together with all such things at that time, and he put all his strength and effort into correcting himself alone. After he had got rid of all anxiety, worry, darkness and obscurity, he reflected and thought back to those things which he had aspired to in the past, and then he set out to do the duty of the Great Teacher, to spread and teach Dhamma to the world. Then all the *Sāvakas* walked the same way along the same path which the Great Teacher had prepared for them. In other words, they were interested in applying the teaching to themselves before giving it to others, until such time as they had attained the goal properly, after which they gradually began teaching their companions and others. In this way they followed the Lord, avoiding pitfalls and dangers. Any Bhikkhu who walks the path, following the well established examples of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* is bound to become a living example of the Dhamma inheritance which was bestowed on him — there is no doubt about this. Those who practise the way should therefore take a pride in this joyful *(sugato)* way.

While discussing the changes in the ways of practice which are tending to diverge from the traditional teachings and to go in the wrong direction, it made me think of the forceful and fiery teaching delivered by Venerable Ajaan Mun due to something which shocked him while he was staying at Wat Nong Peu in Sakon Nakhon. This took place one evening after the Wat had been swept and cleaned up and after the Bhikkhus had washed themselves. A number of Bhikkhus had gathered at Venerable Ajaan's hut where he was talking to them about various aspects of Dhamma. On that day his talk turned to the subject of Venerable Ajaan Sao and he said:

"Venerable Ajaan Sao was a teacher who had great *mettā* for the world as a basic characteristic of his heart. It was far stronger in him than in any of the other *Ācariyas,* in fact he was quite outstanding in this respect, and anyone who had close contact with him was bound to admire and adore him straight away. But as for his teaching to the Bhikkhus, novices and lay people, it was never outstanding or remarkable and it did not have a wide scope and depth like some other *Ācariyas.* He would speak a few sentences and then stop, after which he would sit straight upright, silent, imperturbable and unconcerned, like an image of the Buddha *(Buddha–Rūpa),* without moving a muscle. But what he taught stuck in the hearts of people and those Bhikkhus of the kind who listened and understood, without ever being satiated or bored by it. Having left, they still felt that they wanted to see and hear him speak and they never got tired of it."

"Everybody spoke in the same way about Venerable Ajaan Sao, saying how they loved him and they had so much faith in him. But the pity of it is that none of the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* who were his followers tended to be resolute. Nor did they have any firmly established idea of the way to go, either internally or externally such as should be appropriate to those who had an *Ācariya* of such excellence to teach and train them. This was probably because they tended to be too self-forgetful, lackadaisical, proud and conceited in their self-estimation, although they had nothing much to be conceited or complacent about. For they saw that their Ajaan was kind and tolerant to them with *mettā,* never scolding them nor pointing out their faults immediately and harassing them like all the other *Ācariyas* did. And this was so, even when they did wrong and faulty things right in front of him, things for which they should have been told off and corrected, at least enough to make the wrong doers have some mindfulness to watch out and to be careful of themselves in the future. Then they would not forget themselves in such a gross way until they became accustomed to it and they would be people whose hearts displayed some admirable characteristics."

Venerable Ajaan Mun stopped for a moment and one of the Bhikkhus took the opportunity to ask a rather impudent question which was completely lacking in skill and appropriateness and the kind of thing which could have come from myself, for I have such tendencies in me right up to the present. He asked:

> "Is it true that Venerable Ajaan Sao had gained freedom from the *kilesas* and *āsavas* as everyone says and believes?"

Our *Ācariya*, who had always been concerned to try and train his Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* to be clever and sharp-witted, when he heard this question which was of such a kind as none of them should have been bold and forward enough to ask, just grinned and remained quiet for a while. Then he stared straight at this silly Bhikkhu, whose intention had been pure and good, and he had sympathy, compassion and understanding for him in his silliness and stupidity which it was no use to blame or punish. He started to speak quite gently in the same kind of foolish way as the questioner so as to acknowledge the foolishness and silliness of that Bhikkhu, in the same way as a trained horse responds to the old woman who looks after it. So he said:

> "He reached the goal of freedom *(vimutti)* and *Nibbāna* long ago, since before you were born. What other silly delusions and doubts are you going to ask about? For the way you have learnt to ask questions is most unskilful and lacking in any sort of tact which would indicate that this is a person who has some mindfulness and wisdom in him with which he can cure his *kilesas* and stupidity to some extent. In such a case as this, the *citta* lies contented to be buried in stupidity all the time. In doing meditation practice *(bhāvanā),* stupidity and drowsy nodding sit like a weight pressing down on his head and never showing any signs of improvement, but just swaying back and forth like a monkey swaying about when watching a person. People who are stupid or clever display their characteristics outwardly, quite clearly enough for others to discern, and you in particular would seem to be so stupid as to be pathetic. While listening to any teaching, the Dhamma is not likely to be able to penetrate down to your heart, and those who teach you will soon get tired of it if they have any wisdom in them. That is, apart from those *Ācariyas* who like to speak out because they have been ordained a long time, and they may not even be able to know what their own situation is."

After this, Venerable Ajaan went on teaching that Bhikkhu with consideration and compassion for him. But it was almost as if that Bhikkhu had asked him this stupid question with the clever underlying purpose of inviting him to teach them Dhamma!

The gist of the Dhamma which he taught at that time was not fiery and strong as it had been in the past, but full of consideration and *mettā,* and his mode of delivery was so tender, gentle, impressive and "catching of heart", in a way which cannot be explained. As parents may teach their small child with love and compassion until they manage to get their child to see its faults with a soft heart and tears. I can only recall a little of the gist of the Dhamma which he then taught, so I ask your forgiveness for any faults and failings which will be due to my own delusions. What he said was something like this:

> "Every day that passes by, it seems to me that my companions in Dhamma, instead of getting more and more clever by following the methods of Dhamma which I have taught, are in fact getting steadily more stupid. But I am getting older every day, and the help I can give to you is getting less and less, and as time goes on I am getting more and more decrepit, weary and tired, the parts of this body are steadily degenerating, and it seems that it just manages to keep on breathing from day to day. Various kinds of food which always used to strengthen the body, have now become enemies to the body, and I no longer have any desire to eat anything, in fact it has turned and become a tiresome habit — almost as if it was glad all the time to take just those things which are medicines. The time when I shall die creeps nearer bit by bit without ever stopping or resting to give some relief to the body and its parts at all. My breath which used to flow in and out easily and automatically, now gets rougher and more difficult all the time, as if it is about to leave me altogether any time it can. But when I look at the results of my teaching which should be apparent in accordance with the intention I have had in training and teaching my companions, what do I see but things that I never thought I should see. Some of them are so lazy, weak and irresolute; some are so dull, torpid and lacking in any brightness and enthusiasm in doing the practice of Dhamma. Some of them turn and practise things which differ from the basic principles which I have taught them. Some of them display nothing but stupidity and are almost incapable of reasoned thought — such as asking that question about Venerable Ajaan Sao a short while ago — which is not the way of those who come to learn and train to attain freedom from *dukkha* by following the way along which the Great Teacher *(Sāsadā)* led us to go. Because this was stupidity of a kind that was too obnoxious to hear and put up with. So it made me very concerned

for my companions and followers, that when I die there may be nobody who has both the basic principles in his heart and who puts into practice those methods which will ensure their continuity in the future for posterity."

"I'm afraid it will be as I have said above, so I make haste to implore my companions who have come together here to learn and train, to do so with urgency in your hearts, for this present situation is not one that can remain stable and last long, in which we can afford to be complacent. As time goes by the lives of each one of us is also going by in the same way and those who are heedless and careless will have nothing much of value to take away with them. As the time passes by in this way, the thing which is bound to remain with oneself in an inseparable way, is the state of unreliability and triviality which has always been firmly rooted in one's original traits of character. And the result that comes from heedlessness is that of being trapped in the endless and limitless accumulation of *dukkha.* Then wherever one goes or stays, *Māra* will be waiting to harass one and cause disturbance leading to *dukkha* and trouble in all sorts of ways so that nowhere and never can one let go of it. All the time and everywhere, the careless, negligent person has *dukkha* bound tightly to himself and more tenaciously than his own shadow. This is because of his baneful fault of establishing himself as his own *Māra* by his failure to realise that carelessness and negligence is harmful, and that it is also *Māra,* just waiting to destroy and ruin himself."

"As for one who is not negligent and careless, he will tend to get what is good and beneficial to adorn him and to raise him up. The result of this will be, well-being in the world and contentment in his heart all the time and everywhere; and freedom from dangers and misfortune, accidents and 'bad luck' coming to disturb and torment him. In fact, all the results that come to one from not being negligent will be blessings and advantages without exception."

"I have tried as far as I can to teach all of you in all sorts of different ways and methods, to make yourselves become your own best friends by not being negligent or careless in the work and duties of those who have 'gone forth' and who practise the way. Because I know all the time that before long this body of mine will depart from all of you; as they normally understand it in the conventions of this world. But while I am still alive I can still teach and try to select whatever Dhamma is appropriate to the basic level and disposition of those who have been ordained, to teach with the utmost of my ability without hiding or holding back any part of it at all."

"Therefore, when I see or hear of things which are bad amongst those who have come here to practise the way, such as heedlessness and carelessness, it goes against the aim which I have in mind for all my followers, which is close to my heart. I don't want to see or hear these things, and I don't want any of you to have any interest in doing them, because you will get a name for being careless and heedless; and wherever you are careless and heedless it spoils you every time. So you should pay no attention to these bad things at all. I ask all of you please to be considerate to the one who trains and teaches you, who has set himself to do this task with everything he has got in the way of ability, with willingness and *mettā*."

"Please try your best to train and discipline yourselves with the principles of Dhamma as I have taught them to you repeatedly all the time. Don't be like the ladles or spoons in the stew pot that know nothing of the taste of the stew at all. Instead, you should be like the tongue that knows all the various tastes of the food which comes to it, knowing what they are immediately. I am always anxious to find out how much of the various kinds of Dhamma which I have been teaching you frequently, have penetrated into your hearts each time I give a talk, both in the sphere of practice, the various kinds of understanding which arise from the sphere of practice, and the knowledge which arises and is absorbed while listening to a Dhamma talk. This is a special kind of practice in which the talk that one is listening to, arouses understanding that accords with what is being said, and the insight that one gains accords with whatever the Teacher is explaining — following in step behind the Teacher the whole time. When this happens, nothing of the talk is lost and one's mind is free from any distraction which would otherwise break it up and spoil the causes which bring about those insights, making them very much more difficult to arouse — and the reason for this is the creation of obstacles which also obstruct the results. Therefore, in order to get results smoothly and steadily as one wants them, please do those things which cause these results, with complete commitment. The results will then arise of themselves without any need to try and force them — as one must with the causes."

Here, Venerable Ajaan finished his Dhamma talk which was aimed at helping that Bhikkhu whom he felt sorry for. At this point I feel that I should go on to tell you about what happened after this talk, for the reasonings and the principles of Dhamma which Venerable Ajaan displayed then may act as a

moral that we Buddhists can ponder and keep in mind. If I don't put it down here the strength and weight of the Dhamma which Venerable Ajaan displayed then will be lost. For the subject of this Dhamma concerns that which brings sorrow and regret to those who revere the *Sāsana–Dhamma* and the *Ācariyas.*

How "Modern Bhikkhus" Sell Their Ācariya

After Venerable Ajaan finished the above talk, another Bhikkhu paid respect to Venerable Ajaan and told him about the cremated remains of Venerable Ajaan Sao, saying:

> "Some of the Bhikkhus who are his followers have taken the bony remains and crushed them to a powder and mixed them up with various other powders which they think have supernatural properties. Then they mould them into small Buddha images and sell them in large numbers — and they are asking a high price for each one also! Many people who have reverence for him have bought them without being concerned about whether the cost is low or high. When I found out about this I couldn't help feeling sorry and upset about it. This is all I have to say."

Venerable Ajaan Mun immediately exclaimed:

> "Oh–ho! They've gone that far have they? Those Bhikkhus who destroy the *Sāsana* and their Teachers and *Ācariyas* have become dogs, biting and gnawing even his bones — in fact worse than dogs. Such people are completely thoughtless and they can't find any other way to support themselves, so they have to go and bite and gnaw at the bones of their own Ajaan. Even dogs know their own master and are not likely to go biting and gnawing at him, but here, they are worse than dogs and don't even know their own master, so they bite and gnaw up the lot. People of this kind have lost all sense of shame when they can bite and gnaw up the bones of their teacher, their *Ācariya,* and then go out and sell them!"

"Ho!" he exclaimed, pointing his finger at us and moving it from side to side to include every one of us who was sitting there, then in a fierce and fiery manner, he said:

"All of you who have come to stay with me here, have you come to stay as Bhikkhus, or to live like dogs? Answer me quickly! If you have come here to be Bhikkhus then you must be concerned with Dhamma and establishing the practice in your hearts. But if you have come here to live like dogs as has been the case up to now, then you will be waiting about to scramble for bones, to bite them and gnaw them, and making a living by selling my bones like those thoughtless people. For that's the way of those who indulge in dogs' practices and not the way of Bhikkhus. For they wait about to gnaw the living and to gnaw the dead, never being satisfied and never being ashamed of doing evil in any way at all. With base and mean hearts they wait for the chance to destroy the *Sāsana* and to destroy their own Teacher, their *Ācariya,* quite shamelessly! Who are the clever ones here? Waiting to bite and gnaw my flesh and bones, and to go and sell them, either while I am alive or when I am dead and gone? Quickly! Tell me so that I can give you a title and make your name famous while I am still alive by calling you: 'The merchant who trades in his *Ācariya's* bones.'"

"Not only do Bhikkhus of this kind act like dogs just waiting to gnaw their Teachers bones, but they also have many other tricks for selling their *Ācariya.* Wherever they go, they like to boast that they are a follower of this or that well known *Ācariya* who is highly respected by large numbers of people, and they do this as a way to gain attention and curry favours. They are the type who chop at the flesh, cut away the skin and gnaw the bones of their *Ācariyas,* to sell and to live on for the rest of their lives. They eat away at him until he dies and go on selling him until there is none left. They eat and sell with complete lack of shame and go on doing so all through the rest of their lives, telling everyone and advertising their sales and they can never stop talking to give their mouths some rest — because the maggots — which are their ambitious cravings — have got into their hearts. Until all the Bhikkhus, novices and lay people who are devoted to *sīla,* Dhamma and the ways of practice are all fed up and tired of them and have no desire to meet them or have any association with them even though they are all followers of the same *Ācariya.* Are there any left here staying with me now who are learning the skills of the dogs in gnawing bones? Any who are doing the dogs' practice, waiting to bite and gnaw my bones alive or dead?"

Venerable Ajaan went on speaking in this manner until we were all benumbed. But even then he still went on, attacking and hitting without ever being spe-

cific nor defining his targets, until his listeners were out of their wits, feeling restless and anxious, hot and cold within, and feeling as if they would like to crawl into a hole in the ground. Because of their fear and shame which they could not shake off, as if each of them was the "dog" who was so clever at eating and gnawing his bones — even though this was not the case. After that he went on to describe those Bhikkhus whose hearts were so base and vile and lacking any brightness of Dhamma within them. They had lost all hope in Dhamma, lost all incentive to strive and correct their hearts and lost all interest in finding out about Dhamma, which could change their understanding within themselves and then percolate outward into their behaviour. He went on to say that:

> "This is because their hearts have turned against Dhamma and gone entirely towards the world. They depend only on the material things of the world to be their support *(ārammaṇa)* and the dwelling place of their minds (hearts), as well as the things which adorn them with honour and dignity. By various methods of flattery and cajoling speech, they induce those lay people, who have an inherent tendency, which comes from their traditions and ancestry, to have faith in Bhikkhus, to accept and follow them. Then they go around collecting such people as their followers to increase their esteem and reputation for skilled oratory and clever eloquence. They have the power of a strong charismatic character, with many people who respect and have faith in them, and many followers and disciples. One may be sure that the day will come when they forget themselves and their conceit and vanity grows and piles up until they completely lose all sense of proportion. Then day and night, they will spend their whole time, disturbed and agitated by all sorts of things; persuading this person to build this, and that person to construct that, and how much merit will come from it. Even while they are preparing themselves to jump into the hell of creating disturbance and turmoil, the whole time."
>
> "Such people cannot even establish any stability in themselves by being calm and contented for two moments together, because their hearts and minds are spoilt, their virtue is spoilt, and also because their minds and hearts are always full of those things which accumulate and promote those *kilesas* typified by worldly, material desires. This makes them persistently agitated and it also makes them go out touring around involving others and begging from Buddhists who have faith, in all sorts of ways to make some

contributions for constructing and building this or that sacred structure which is said to have supernatural significance — 'and rather expensive!' They do this over and over again in all sorts of ways until we can't keep up with the tricks and methods of such Bhikkhus as this, who are quite extraordinary."

"But when it comes to the ways of calm and happiness of heart, both for themselves and others, they hardly have any interest at all. Even when they go to stay with a teacher, an *Ācariya,* they only do so as a way to jump on the band-wagon, and as mere ceremony. So that they can claim that they came and stayed and trained under this very prominent and important *Ācariya,* and so that when they leave they will be able to announce this and advertise themselves as widely as is possible. This is how those who practise the way of self-advertisement act with the bloated conceit, thinking that: 'Now I am clever enough so that my brightness and clarity is sparkling and shining out because I have been living as a close follower who has pleased this important *Ācariya.*' In a short while he leaves the *Ācariyas* monastery, bright and full of himself, but he has still not tried his hand, his skill, his strength and ability at all. Soon, the new personality he has made for himself makes him want to talk and to say: 'Whoever wants to try his hand, come here quickly to be trained and become worthy of the knowledge *(vijjā)* which I have just succeeded in attaining. You will get the Path *(Magga)* and the Fruition *(Phala)* quickly, which you have been wanting and aspiring to for a long time. I am not just playing and trying to show off how clever I am, for the knowledge I have is truly as I claim.' So when other people who have Buddhism deeply embedded in their character do not believe what the Bhikkhus say, who can they believe and who can they trust? There is nobody to have faith in but the Bhikkhus, but when they believe in those Bhikkhus of the type who bite and gnaw the bones, flesh and skin of their Teacher, their *Ācariya* as well as the lay people, the way is open for them all to go to ruin with him — which is a sorry thing to happen."

"This is what I am most afraid of — that this sort of thing which I have described is sure to happen. Because of the base and low state of the minds and hearts of those Bhikkhus who practise like parasites and who just lay in wait to destroy the field of their companions, as well as the hearts and minds of other Buddhists, causing endless destruction and ruin. See how Venerable Ajaan Sao died only a few years ago, yet so soon his own followers have turned and become like grubs and worms destroying everything

by themselves in all sorts of ways. So I can't believe that, when the time comes, those followers of mine of the parasitic kind who come to stay here with me temporarily from time to time, will not do the same kind of thing — or worse. As for those Bhikkhus of the kind who are genuine and follow the ways of their Teacher, life will be difficult for them and they will be rejected in the popular esteem of the world. In other words, they will be blamed and criticised because they will all be associated together equally as followers of the teacher."

"Those who act with such base and evil motives in their hearts and minds can never come to any self-knowledge and understanding at all, right up to the day that they die. This makes me concerned for those who practise the way well and properly, of whom there are a large number. For they will have to put up with whatever disturbance comes from those Bhikkhus who are made of 'piss and shit' and go about scattering it all over their companions and causing them to stink as well. I have often talked with concern and anxiety for the circle of those who come to stay here, and what concerns me most are those members who are just waiting to destroy themselves and their companions so that all of them deteriorate and rot away together! Because this type of person is not the type to listen patiently and accept the reasoning concerning good and evil from the Teacher, with strong interest in Dhamma — nor from anyone else for that matter. Even while they are living and staying with the *Ācariya* they tend to display the characteristics of those who tend towards things which are base and evil and they have shown up themselves for me to see quite clearly. So when they leave their *Ācariya,* I am quite sure that they will display their abilities as much as their skill enables them to do so. Don't think that I don't know! Because there are gross and obvious things which don't need any subtle investigation for one to be able to know and understand. In fact, without even trying I can see them and know them; and I can know every part of them and how they move and act both internally and externally; but I keep it to myself. While they are staying with their Teacher, or while the Teacher is still alive, they try to improve their claws and keep their teeth under cover most of the time, enough to put on a seemly appearance to the world, so that they don't seem to be too reckless and independent. But as soon as the Teacher is dead and gone, these parasitical Bhikkhus get their chance to display their colours as much as they can in all sorts of ways, without any restraint, because there is nothing left for them to fear which could arouse any remorse or shame in them."

"When people have completely lost all interest in Dhamma, they are capable of doing all kinds of evil without having any sense of remorse or shame at all. It is people of this kind who are capable of doing great harm to their own companions and to Buddhism *(Sāsana)*, by depending on the yellow robe and the requisites of a *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* as their means of living and destroying themselves. I am very concerned about them because they are inured to their ways and resistant to the remedy. For they are clever with Dhamma theory and it is hard to find anyone to equal those monks who have lost all sense of shame and fear *(Hiri–Ottappa–Dhamma)* of what the future holds for them within their hearts."

"I don't praise those Bhikkhus who act in ways that are not praiseworthy, nor do I blame those who should not be blamed. But I do praise those Bhikkhus who practise well and who should be held in admiration, and I also blame those Bhikkhus who are worthy of blame. For amongst all the Bhikkhus who have come to me and made a formal agreement *(paṭiñāṇa)* to be my followers both old and new, there are those who are evil and worthy of blame as well as those who are good and worthy of praise, all mixed together. It has always been like this through the past ages, right up to the present time — some evil and many good. But for those of you who still have hope in Dhamma as being that kind of wealth which you should attain, I ask you please, to take to heart all these aspects of Dhamma which I have displayed here. As for those who are creating a situation of hopelessness for themselves in their own futures and refuse to look at their own faults, they should not stay here to be a burden on the *Sāsana,* the *Ācariya* and all their companions. They should go out and create their own ruin to their hearts content, for after they die there is no more creating and building, and they can enjoy the results of the *kamma* which they like so much, all on their own, and nobody else will disturb them by trying to grab some of it for themselves! They will probably have lots of fun on their own, because this kind of *kamma* result *(vipāka)* is loathed and greatly feared by the world of good people and they can be sure that nobody will dare to steal any of it, for sure."

"I have trained and taught you all from when I first started, up to the present day, but now I am old and before long I shall die. I reckon that I have taught you everything, both in external things as well as internal and there is nothing left over with which to make up any more remedies. Any of you who still feel unsatisfied will have to make it up for yourselves. But

take care not to alter it and turn it into poison that destroys yourself as well as your companions — as we have seen and heard just now. Apart from this you may go ahead as you will, and with my blessing also."

When Venerable Ajaan finished this talk which came like a thunderbolt, none of the Bhikkhus who were there dared to move or fidget about at all, for they were all rigidly holding themselves still and silent. When he saw how afraid and pitiful they looked, he started to talk Dhamma in a soothing, gentle manner, speaking quite softly, as if it was coming from a completely different person, saying:

"What I have just said was for the purpose of overcoming a powerful and virulent disease which otherwise would spread throughout those who practise the way — much in the same way as an epidemic spreads out and about everywhere on the physical plane. If this happened, good people would not be able to live in such conditions, for it would be like a fire going round the whole world, burning everything."

"Of course, I have sympathy for those whose intention in coming here is interest and desire for Dhamma. But when Dhamma is revealed to the relative, conventional world, there is no soundproof room available and no way to divide out what ought to be heard by this person and what by that person. So what is taught is bound to be heard by all who are there, regardless of who is guilty, who is innocent, who is good and who is evil in any aspect of the teaching. But you should check for yourself while listening, to see whether you are free from fault or going in the wrong way, or whether you are free of fault and well established in each aspect of the teaching. In this way it is a means of indicating where one is right and where wrong, for the Dhamma which one hears is a bright light showing up and enabling one to see the wrong path and the right path in the way of practice, both in the present and for the future, quite clearly. This is in conformity with one's intention in coming here to train and learn so as to attain knowledge and skill for oneself. Because amongst those who are truly interested in Dhamma, there are many who still do not understand the methods of practice. If they do not hear and learn something about them to act as a guide, they are quite likely to see someone else doing wrong, faulty things, and then follow their example without thinking, checking or investigating these things. This way can lead to loss and ruin, even though they have no intention of doing anything wrong. This is especially true if they chance to meet any of

those "big sharks" which I described a short while ago, for they will easily be swallowed up, which is most unfortunate and springs from their lack of training and their inability to see through these charlatans."

From then on he continued speaking in a normal way as if nothing unusual had taken place. This gave all the Bhikkhus a break so that they could get their breath back. For his manner was completely different from what it had been, when they were, as if in a confined closed pot, doing penance to change their wrong views — unable to breath properly while being scorched by the cathartic–Dhamma *(Tapa–Dhamma).*

When the talk came to an end, one by one they saluted Venerable Ajaan and left his hut. Some of them were relaxed and smiling, like prisoners who have just been released, and they gathered in groups to have their usual discussion. But some of the Bhikkhus appeared to be rather angry and one of them blurted out saying:

"Why did you have to go and talk about that? Couldn't you have chosen something more reasonable and suitable to talk about? You see what happened and how it turned out! I should think that there were some who almost fainted when they were knocked about like that! Before you do that sort of thing, why don't you ask someone who knows Venerable Ajaan's character well? Then, when you have something good and reasonable to ask him, go ahead. If this sort of thing happens again, that you bring up something to tell Venerable Ajaan as bad as you told him today, then I won't come to these talks. I'll leave it up to those who are good and clever to receive such a beating on their own."

The one who told Venerable Ajaan said:

"Actually, I never thought that he would take it so strongly as he did, so I told him without thinking anything of it."

He then went on to say quite reasonably:

"Whoever thinks that he has been scolded unreasonably has not seen his own faults — isn't that so? But for myself, I wanted him to be even stronger and more heavy handed. Today my *citta* gave way and went so calm — almost like I was dead. For Venerable Ajaan's talk just suited the disposition of my *citta* which is so playful and had been going all over the world today.

If I try doing the meditation practice on my own, my *citta* is so stubborn, it jumps all over the place and wont give way and calm down at all, like a herd of monkeys in a cage. But today, as soon as I was hit by Venerable Ajaan's strong Dhamma penetrating into it, my *citta* had no way of escape, so it gave way and calmed down quite easily."

Another Bhikkhu said with evident satisfaction:

"Oh, it was really good today, I would like to offer my thanks to you for having the courage to tell him such a thing. After this I wonder if anyone will be able to bring up anything so unusual, controversial and inflammatory to tell him, so that my monkey *citta* will be able to get a bit of calm and happiness while he beats it and scolds it so strongly. Since I came and first heard Venerable Ajaan's talks I have never heard any which was so important and significant for me as the one today."

Another of the Bhikkhus then also spoke with satisfaction about this talk.

That day many Bhikkhus were present who heard Venerable Ajaan speak, some were in his hut, but there were others at the side and underneath his hut who had heard the noise and come to see what it was about. They variously had different reactions to what he said. Many were so afraid of him that they almost forgot to breathe. But there were also many who liked to listen to strong and forceful talks, for when they hear this kind of talk their *cittas* become very calm and unshakeable at such a time.

A number of Bhikkhus, most of whom had recently come to the Wat to stay with Venerable Ajaan felt both afraid and ashamed and wanted to crawl into a hole in the ground. Their *cittas* were hot and burning and they found no joy at all while listening, even though they found nothing to blame in themselves in the Dhamma that he was teaching. In particular my own feelings were turbulent and rather mad — all within my own heart. But the thing which went right home and stuck fast in my heart right up to the present day, was when he said:

"Are you learning and practising in the manner of dogs, or in what manner?"

Really, this was just because I didn't want to be a dog, even though I had virtually become one already due to my lack of circumspect wisdom. But I didn't realise that I had already become a fully fledged dog from the first moment

when Venerable Ajaan talked about: "dogs gnawing and eating bones"; while priding myself with the thought in my heart that:

> "I didn't come to practise so as to become a dog, but to become a complete, fully fledged Bhikkhu — and I didn't come to practise so as to get hold of his bones at all, but for Dhamma — which means the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna.*"

From that day when I became a "dog", secretly — nobody else knew — I didn't even know myself — but from the moment when I heard what Venerable Ajaan said, it became firmly fixed in my heart that I didn't come to stay and practise with him in the manner of a dog.

I must apologise to the reader for disclosing my gross stupidity, for it seems to me that there was not much virtue left in me, so I want to let it be known how stupid I was. But I ask you please to go on reading with sympathy, because what I have related is the truth.

After this, when Venerable Ajaan died and his remains were cremated and the time came to share out his bone relics and requisites so that his followers could use them as reminders and as objects of reverence and *pūjā,* I quickly ran off into the forests and hills where nobody knew where I was, thinking how clever I was. How, if I had stayed there until they shared out the remains I would have to accept my share of his requisites and bone relics, then I could not be free from being a dog, like he said. So finally the dog who was far too clever, went off to the hills and forests, not wanting to wait and accept his share of the remains of Venerable Ajaan at all. This is an example of how stupid one can become, while at the same time thinking how clever one is. It had gone so far that I was virtually a dog because of that way of thinking, while also understanding that I was a Bhikkhu with a peaceful heart and afraid that I would become a dog. It really is a pitiful, sorry thing that I should interpret those words of Venerable Ajaan's Dhamma talk in this way, causing me to become a complete dog without any thought or reflection at all. For I was still afraid that I could become a dog while having the conceit that I was not one.

About a year after Venerable Ajaan died I began to recognise my foolishness and how I had so cleverly and completely misunderstood what he said that it was more than one could expect him to pardon. What led me to see how foolish I had been, before it was too late, so that the Guardian of Hell had to

take my name off his list which was like "breaking up hell", was thinking back and recalling the virtues of Venerable Ajaan on various occasions and doing so all the time regardless of whatever else I was doing. This went on until it suddenly struck me with a jolt:

> "Oh–ho! Buddhists who pay homage to the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the *Sangha,* do so to a Buddha image, to the requisites and the places of significance in the life of the Lord. They also pay homage to the Dhamma which is printed in books and written on palm leaf manuscripts and elsewhere; and they pay homage to the *Sangha* who are the representatives of the Lord and uphold his name and his ways of practice right through to the elimination of the *kilesas.* The homage and respect which they pay the Lord is most appropriate and excellent, and the form of their traditions is an ideal example, for us Buddhists who follow after them, to grasp and uphold as a good, flawless and blameless example. It is for this reason that I should accept the requisites and bone relics of Venerable Ajaan Mun, and keep them and honour them and pay the highest respect to them, in the same way that all his other followers have done. For they stand in the place of Venerable Ajaan, to whom I gave the greatest respect and love, so that I would have willingly sacrificed everything for him without regret."
>
> "Why have I been afraid of becoming a dog? Oh–ho! Haven't I already become a dog in the guise of a self-opinionated Bhikkhu, because of the damage done by my own stupidity from the moment when I heard that talk of Venerable Ajaan's? So I'm smart and clever, but I don't know what it is that makes one become a dog, a Bhikkhu or a human being. Thinking I was so clever has turned me into a dog, except that I don't have a tail as most dogs do. This is a really sorry state that I am in, and there is no way I can ask for forgiveness, for it is too late already. Venerable Ajaan Mun who had so much *mettā* for me and who was afraid I would become a dog has already gone into *Parinibbāna.* For what Venerable Ajaan taught in that talk I refused to accept and instead I got it all wrong and turned it into the ideas of a dog, and even though he spoke so strongly against this, I still would not listen. What a thing to happen! *"Anicca vata sankhārā".*[135] How the *sankhāras* can deceive a

135. This and the three following sayings in *Pāli* are from a verse that is always said at funerals. The usual translation of them are:

> "Impermanent are all conditioned things –
> They are brought into existence;
> Having come to life they die away and cease,
> This is the highest happiness."

> Bhikkhu, turning him into a dog before his very eyes. *"Upādavayadhammino"*. Right now I have been as a dog in the guise of a Bhikkhu. *"Uppajjhitvā niru-jjhanti"*. Having been born as a dog, by what various means and methods will I be able to get rid of the state of being a dog. Quickly! Think, search, for a way to get rid of this state; don't waste time or dawdle about as if I was a Bhikkhu, when in fact at this moment I am a dog! *"Tesaṁ Vūpasamo Sukho"*. By stopping and getting rid of all thoughts which led me to become a dog, the dog within me will die away and my heart will automatically become happy as it disappears."

Having fully realised my faulty ways, I paid respects to Venerable Ajaan and asked for pardon with fullness of heart and then hurried about to ask for some of his bone remains which they had set aside for the general public to pay homage to for the time being. Once the construction of the Uposatha hall in Wat Suddhāvāsa in Sakon Nakhon Province was completed, they were to be placed under the *Buddha–rūpa.* Venerable Pra Kru Udom Dhammaguṇa (Ajaan Mahā Tongsuk Sucitto), the Abbot of Wat Suddhāvāsa was very kind and friendly to this foolish Bhikkhu. But even after I had been given some of the relics of Venerable Ajaan and felt satisfied with them, they also acted as a reminder — as if the results of the *kamma (vipāka)* of that dog were still clinging to me and I couldn't get rid of them. In particular, when I got the bone relics, I was hoping from day to day that they would turn into *Arahant Dhātu.*[136] But at the same time there was something which made me realise all the time that Venerable Ajaan's bone relics would never become *Dhātu* while they were under the influence of that *kamma* of mine which came from the time when I insulted him with my stupidity. If they no longer remained in my possession, there is no doubt that they could easily become *Dhātu.* It was most strange and wonderful how, when they were shared out to other people to pay respect to with *pūjā*, his bone relics very soon turned into *Dhātu.* This is so different from what happens when they are in the possession of one who is infected with the great evil of a lot of self-destroying wisdom so that he had no faith. But this is what happened to me, and this *kamma* has still not gone, nor does it disperse easily. Even those relics of Venerable Ajaan which I was keeping have gone gradually, despite my full-hearted respect and devotion for him — until now I have reverted to my former state. In other words, by myself, empty handed, as if this were the same old dog — which

136. These are the special relics that are found amongst the bone remains after the cremation of most *Arahants*. They vary in form from sapphire like jewels, to white pebble like lumps. They are quite unlike cremated bone which is soft and crumbles easily.

in truth suits my level and status. Nowadays when I try to find any bone relics or *Dhātu,* of Venerable Ajaan it is quit hopeless and I have no way to get any of them to pay respect and reverence to. In the end this has enabled me to live free from concern, like someone who lives contentedly without hope, even though my heart is still restlessly wanting to get some relics. So I keep reminding myself, saying:

> "Now do you believe? This is *kamma* which you can see clearly with your own eyes and you don't have to go and ask anyone else about it."

This is how I have been teaching myself to be mindful, by the use of irony, so that in the future, however I may think about all the things we do think about, I shall not do so with conceit and pride in my skills and ability, while seeing only one side of the thing in question without going over it many times and seeing it from all sorts of angles and directions — which is the way that those who are truly clever, have always used.

Since that time, even though I have seen and fully accepted my fault, there is still some remaining disharmony in my heart in connection with the bone relics of Venerable Ajaan. It is not easy to overcome and get rid of like ordinary forms of good and evil which are experienced by people. This is what they call *mano–kamma* (*kamma* made by mind) and before this happened I thought it gave rise to results in the same way as other forms of *kamma* which we do in connection with the five doors of sense. It never impressed me as being anything much, before this incident, but once it became clear to me how it was between me and the relics of Venerable Ajaan, all doubts that I had in regard to *kamma* disappeared entirely concerning the way that *kamma* gives rise to results and what kind of results also. Anyone who makes *kamma* should be able to know this for himself, provided that he does not forget all about it, although he may not care to talk about it to other people.

The talk that Venerable Ajaan Mun gave on that day was given with the full intention and *mettā* of rendering the utmost assistance to all of us in a manner which is difficult to explain. He helped us by closing off all those paths which led to such vile, despicable and evil ways, for fear that they may overflow and stain and spoil that which is still good and useful. He helped us to close those paths with the utmost vigour and skill, because to take the bone relics of one's Teacher and sell them is a most loathsome and despicable thing to do for a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who has been trained well. Once he knows what is good

and evil in this he is not likely to do such a thing. So Venerable Ajaan likened the doing of such a thing to the actions of a dog. Because this was a case of biting and gnawing in the manner of animals who know nothing of merit and evil, or the virtue and vice which is the basis of human behaviour and ways of practical interrelationships. When we don't do such things as "biting" and "gnawing" like dogs, then we cannot become dogs — that's all!

But in the special case of one who was not quite all there and who distorted what was said, twisting it completely into his own characteristic thoughts by being afraid that, taking the bone relics of Venerable Ajaan as a basis for paying respect and *pūjā* would result in his becoming a dog, it finally turned him into a dog, due to his own stupidity. So I implore all of you who read this not to grasp hold of one facet or aspect of your thoughts and understanding about anything and then go and take this as a guide to your actions. For this will lead you to become someone who is not circumspect, not seeing all sides of a situation, and to have mistakes and faults which may be handed down to many other people. But when one's thoughts and understanding have been tested and thoroughly examined in detail, they will probably be the kind of thoughts which are suitable for putting into action in all things. Such thoughts are not likely to be at fault either in the world or in Dhamma. Even if it only concerns one's own practice for one's own development one should promote such modes of thought so that one will not make mistakes leading to sorrow in the future. So those who have faith in Buddhism should have circumspection imbued with reason in their practice of the Buddhist teachings. Then whatever they do in the world, or in Dhamma, will not be wrong or mistaken, going in a direction at variance with their intentions. Because the principles of Buddhism are controlled by reason in every part and every sentence throughout the whole of the Dhamma which is constantly proclaimed and taught in this religion.

There are some people who have a belief in Buddhism, and although this is the same Dhamma teaching of the Lord Buddha as it has always been, yet they practise in different ways, that look different and are characteristically different, while apparently keeping close to Buddhism as the guarantor of the correctness of what they are doing — until some others can no longer accept it and disagree with them. This is something which should be thought about by those Buddhists who clearly understand the reasoning behind the principles of Dhamma. So that the way they act and do things shall not be erratic,

unstable and unreliable, but in harmony with the principles of the *Sāsana Dhamma* — which is the teaching that is truly derived from the *Sāsadā* — the Great Teacher — both in the causes which it teaches us to perform, and the results that come from them, which do not contradict each other — unlike what is always happening amongst those who are Buddhists.

If one thinks and examines carefully about the major tenets and the lesser teachings of Buddhism, even though there may be some disagreements between the different branches of Dhamma and their characteristic manner of doing things, it is probably not so much as to cause great annoyance and disaffection, such as we can see happening now. One can almost say that this, thinking about the principles of the *Sāsana,* is a "home remedy" in the war of words amongst Buddhists who are like people throwing water at each other at the New Year festival of Songkran,[137] without any thought as to whether the time and place is appropriate, even though both sides are full of the best intentions in regard to the *Sāsana.* From this we can see some of the faults and deficiencies in us Buddhists who go about doing the practice following our own understanding and inclinations rather than being firmly grounded in the principles of Dhamma which point out the direction we should go like a compass needle.

Ways & Manners of Eating

In what I have already written, I have mentioned the bowl and the size of bowl which is used by *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus.* The bowl is considered to be a very important requisite both when living normally and also when going out wandering in secluded places to practise the *Samaṇa* Dhamma (Dhamma of a recluse). Under normal conditions, if a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* is going to eat food, he must go for *piṇḍapāta* as part of his daily routine, and these Bhikkhus always eat out of the bowl. When they go out wandering in the *kammaṭṭhāna* way, they use the bowl to keep their various possessions in, much in the same way as lay people take along a suitcase when they go travelling. If there are several *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* staying together in a dwelling or monastery they will normally eat together after returning from *piṇḍapāta.* In this case, or when there are several Bhikkhus going

137. The Songkran Festival, occurs usually in April in the hot season. This is called the "Water Festival" because people go about throwing water at and over each other, almost regardless of their position or social level.

out wandering together, after returning to the place where they are staying, the normal practice is to take the food out of their bowls and put it all together on trays, after which it is shared out evenly to all of them. After this, if there are any lay people present, the Bhikkhus give thanks *(anumodanā)* by chanting the *"Yathā... Sabbī...,"* after which they start eating from the bowl by hand. But generally they tend to give *anumodanā* in the village, after they have received all the *piṇḍapāta* food, in a small shelter which the villagers have constructed in a suitable place — or sometimes two places for this purpose. The Bhikkhus sit down here and give the *anumodanā,* after which they return to where they are staying, in which case the villagers do not follow them, they just put all the food of all kinds into their bowls and leave them alone.

After the Bhikkhus have arranged the food in their bowls and before they start eating, they make themselves calm. Then they contemplate the food by recollection *(paccavekkhaṇa)* of its purpose, using the *"Paṭisangkhā yoniso...,"* verse which points out the nature of the various different kinds of food which are in one's bowl, by way of *anicca, dukkha* and *anattā,* by way of *paṭikūlasaññā* (loathsomeness), and by way of the *dhātu* (elements of existence). Whichever one of these is used will depend on the skill and ability of each individual to use as he is able to. This is done for at least one minute, after which they dip their hands into their bowls and start to eat in a controlled and seemly manner while being mindful of the process of eating food.

While eating they do not chatter or talk except when it becomes necessary, in which case they make themselves fully self-conscious before speaking, they say what has to be said and then stop. Before speaking they wait until they have had time to swallow any food that they may have in the mouth and then speak clearly, not mumbling, which would be an ill mannered way of speaking while eating. While speaking they fix their attention on speaking until they have finished saying what is necessary. Then they resume eating in a seemly and proper manner as before, with mindfulness watching over the process of chewing and eating the whole time, to make sure that they are not making loud and unseemly noises of crunching and munching which would be bad manners and characteristic of carelessness and greed.

They keep their eyes on the bowl and their thoughts mindfully associated with what is in the bowl, not looking all about the place at other things while eating — which is the way of those who forget themselves and lack mindfulness. While they are eating, they contemplate whatever aspect of Dhamma suits their ability, such as, by taking the food as a supporting basis *(ārammaṇa)*, or sometimes other forms of Dhamma which they are used to investigating as the supporting

basis of their contemplation. But usually they contemplate the food that they are eating rather than other forms of Dhamma.

Eating food in a careful, self-controlled manner with mindfulness present, while contemplating with wisdom, will probably give rise to some unusual experiences quite often while eating. Sometimes a feeling of weariness and disaffection with eating can arise so that one has got to stop eating for a short while — or stop entirely. This is because the "taste" of Dhamma which arises at that time is so greatly superior to the dull fascination that one has in the food one is eating.

The process of picking up the food and putting it in one's mouth should be done with mindfulness present the whole time, just the same as in any other forms of practice. For eating food is one of the primary routines in the Bhikkhu's life and not inferior to any of the others as a means of steadily getting rid of the *kilesas* within them. If they are not careful and they become so fascinated by the taste of the food that they forget themselves, their eating turns into the "way of the world" and it cannot then be considered as one of the regular routines of a Bhikkhu who aspires to see where danger lies in everything which is within his ability to experience in his total environment and in all situations. Therefore, all the true *Ācariyas,* such as Venerable Ajaan Mun, have always looked upon the process of eating food as being a most important routine. When they eat food the Bhikkhus all eat together, and however many of them there may be, it seems to each one as if he is alone with no other Bhikkhus present, because they do not talk together and each one of them is concerned only with his own practice, self-controlled and peaceful. This comes from their belief that eating food is a routine in which they should take some interest, for it is an aspect of Dhamma in the same way as all the other routines that they follow.

16

The Customs of Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus

The Tradition of Respect & Reverence For Their Teachers & Each Other

It is a tradition amongst *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* to have great respect and reverence for their leaders. When eating food, if the leader has not started eating, the others wait until he has begun. Then they begin from the next most senior, going down the line to the most junior. If the teacher, the *Ācariya,* or the Chief Bhikkhu is not present, they then pay respect to the next most senior.

This is generally the way they have practised in most *kammaṭṭhāna* monasteries, right up to the present day and there does not appear to have been any change in it. But how it will be in the future is rather uncertain, because the world is changing rapidly and as they say, "progressing", day by day, and it may be that *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* will also change and "progress" in the same direction as the rest of the world. For everyone wants "progress" — and the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* are people with hearts and minds, the same as everyone else, and it would be rather strange if they did not want "progress" in the same way as all the others. As for the senior Bhikkhus, they are very old and have enough long years of experience in the ways of the world, and of Dhamma, and whatever "progress" or "regress" takes place, they are probably not capable of knowing much about it. They are mostly old and venerable, looking after their monasteries where they want to take their last breath and reach the end of the life of the *kilesas,* and they are passing away day by day. As for myself, writing this book, I am in a different situation, for I just go on

writing, which is like the old Venerable Ones, but without thinking whether any of the Bhikkhus will be interested in it or not. I just keep on writing, as if my ears and eyes are closed to anything else, so please don't take offence at any of it. While you are reading, please just skip over any sentences or paragraphs which are not essential and could be left out. You can save time and put it to use in doing other things which are more valuable and more essential. Then you will be someone who knows the value of time!

In the case of Venerable Ajaan Mun, before he started eating he contemplated for a long time, as if he were doing a meditation practice. Some days in the evening, or at night, when it was opportune, he would with *mettā* tell us about the contemplative investigation *(vicāraṇā–paccavekkhana)* which is used at the time of eating food. He said:

> "Dhamma always tends to become apparent while eating. Sometimes it brings various skilful ways which stick fast in one's mind so that one follows and thinks about them for many days. At other times it can give rise to revulsion and weariness for the food in one's bowl; which can reach the point where the *citta* is so disenchanted with food that there is no desire to eat."

Here, he is referring to the time when he was practising the way very strictly and putting everything he had got into it. He went on to say:

> "When any perceptions arise which conflict with Dhamma, one must use an effective method to overcome and cure those *kilesas,* which are tired of oneself (food), with one's full strength, so that the *citta* will be able to accept this method and go down into its natural state of Truth — which is the middle way. Otherwise, the *citta* would never agree to eat food at all, for it sees the food in the bowl as being nothing but "s…". At such a time, being compelled to eat is rather like someone who is forced to go to the charnel ground to admire the beauty of the dead bodies. I had to investigate with all my strength to find a way to cure this kind of *kilesa,* which I had never truly met before and which was obscuring my understanding. This I did in the same way as contemplating the "beautiful" and seeing it as loathsome. The *citta* was then able to return to its normal state and I could then eat as usual. After that I had to use many different ways in association with it, such as, to set up comprehension (knowing), to set up circumspection, to set up fear and to set up strength and determination, and to change them about as required."

"But the fact that the *citta* displayed a state of knowing those characteristics which arose was good in one way. For it made my *sati–paññā* skilful, adaptable, and fit for use in all sorts of different ways to keep up with the endless tricks of the *kilesas* which deceive and lead one astray. The more my *citta* gained bold, venturesome and energetic tendencies, the less I was able to investigate *(vicāraṇā)* in the more usual ways. I had to go for those *kilesas* which are impostors until I could get right at them. Therefore I am always able to speak with full confidence and say that the best and most important weapons in one's investigations into all forms of Dhamma, both gross and subtle are *sati* and *paññā.* With these two superb instruments present I did not lose out easily to the *kilesas* — as in the investigation into the food in my bowl, to see it as loathsome for the purpose of cutting away at the concern and delusion associated with taste; and so that the food is seen as mere elementary materials, or as just those conditions (Dhamma) that I had to depend on to live from day to day. But when this happened and I saw it in this way in my *citta* while doing the investigation, it changed and became wearied and averse — which increased until it became revulsion, so strong that I could not fight against it and go on eating. As if such foods had never been things that supported life and nourished the material elements *(dhātu)* and the *khandhas.* This kind of aversion is the way of the world and it is in this same way that people everywhere have aversion. This aversion conceals Dhamma and it is not the 'Middle Way' which the Lord taught us to follow."

He went on to say:

"It was this kind of aversion that, in the time of the Buddha, made some of the Bhikkhus so averse towards themselves that they themselves hired someone to come and kill them — which is the wrong way of aversion. This is also the kind of aversion that causes a cramped, clogged up state internally, in which the heart has no room to move nor freedom. In this state the heart manages to produce a *kilesa* of a subtle kind without realising it and it believes in it completely. But I was able to catch and arrest the tricks of this *kilesa* which arose when I became averse to food. For my *sati* and *paññā* were already well up to dealing with its tricks and the disguises which it displayed, as well as its offspring's and many relatives, spreading out into aversion for parts of the body, for life and existence."

"After I had investigated and found out what this aversion was all about, my *citta* went calm and quieted down, and true seeing of a particular kind arose in its place. Since then I have always upheld that Dhamma as a basic principle and this aversion as a lesson to be learned. For, regardless of however I investigated, inwardly or outwardly, widespread or narrowly confined, grossly or subtly, and to whatever extent, I had to have a strategy of both retreating and going forward to attack. In other words, investigating and reviewing, going forwards and backwards in order to get thoroughly and circumspectly into the subtleties of whatever I was dealing with."

"After that occasion, when I became averse to eating food, I never again let myself go free of control to contemplate in the usual way of people. The exceptional nature of what I came to know at that time sharpened my *sati* and *paññā* considerably — as a knife is sharpened on a grindstone — making me lose all complacency in everything. Apart from investigating and reviewing with *sati* and *paññā* in this way, until I was satisfied that I could not find anything within myself that contradicted this knowledge, the result that came from such investigations was an absolute and intimate certainty of heart in every aspect of Dhamma. This is why I am able to speak with full confidence and certainty and to be absolutely sure that whatever you go after you will get. If you go after stupidity you will just get stupidity; if you go after cleverness you will get cleverness; if you go after greed you will just get greed; if you go after anger you will just get a heart full of anger. Go after evil and you get evil, go after good and you get good. Or, in more detail, look for demerit and you just get demerit; look for merit and you just get merit; look for hell and you just get hell, that which burns you up; look for heaven, and you get heaven. But even if you look for *Nibbāna* you still cannot get free from striving and searching, which is no other than the fundamental causes — which are: "searching and acting". For there have been those who have sought and got the results that come from these causes of "searching and acting", long ages before we were born — in fact we may reckon ever since the earth gave rise to animals and people — as we conventionally suppose. So, blindly and stupidly to deny evil, happiness and *dukkha,* is to obstruct our own way forward, to make ourselves stupid and to waste our time — to what purpose?"

"If it is true as we suppose that human beings are more clever than animals, then that view must be seen as absolutely meaningless. Being born

> and then dying uselessly because our own stupidity kills us, as if we were our own executioners. There! That's the truth, and those who are ready to think about this should hurry up and do so. Don't just sit about in dull self-satisfaction, merely standing, walking, sitting and lying about gathering more stupidity and living vainly. For when you die you will have wasted all your time as well as all the food, the cloth and all the other things which the lay people donate. For they are anxious to make merit so as to help and support those who have been ordained out of faith and hope for the final goal, and have also set themselves to get rid of all the *kilesas* and to expel them entirely from their hearts. But when the *sati–paññā* in one's heart is no greater than a grain of sand it is no more able to kill off any of the *kilesas* than the bite of a flea or a mosquito. For what reason should the *kilesas* die when *sati–paññā* and the effort one is putting forth are still so meagre? What is going to kill them? This makes me feel at present that I have about come to the end of my *sati–paññā* in sympathy with all of you!"

At the end of his talk, Venerable Ajaan probably felt vexed and frustrated, so he "aimed a blow" at us, so that he would not spoil the status of one who was supreme in the circle of the *Sāsana* in this present age.

Steadily and continually contemplating with *sati–paññā* present, even while taking food, is what makes it possible for the illuminating flow of Dhamma to shine forth and arise whenever it will; for there is no special time for it to arise. As Venerable Ajaan Mun so graciously instructed us, telling us about both what things are wrong and what are right and it seemed to act as a method which developed *sati–paññā* in those who were interested.

In regard to the feeling of weariness of eating which arises from the contemplation of food just before starting to eat, even some of the white robed *upāsikās* were rather like Venerable Ajaan in this, but I won't go further into this just now. But there is one case which is worth considering, at the time when Venerable Ajaan was staying at Wat Nong Peu in Sakon Nakhon. There was an *upāsikā* who came and told him how she had been unable to take any food for two or three days, because of her revulsion and weariness for food as well as for all parts of her body, and of other people's also. She had become wearied of food, of the body and of life in all situations associated with the body. She was unable to sleep, and when she looked at any food, which previously she had always thought of as being sustenance for the body and mind, she saw it

instead, as being so repulsive that she could not bring herself to take it and swallow it. When she looked at her own body and the bodies of other people, they seemed utterly repulsive throughout, as if they were living corpses in a charnel ground, decaying all the time — and there was no part she could find that was not utterly repulsive and corpse like. Apart from being wearied of food, she was also tired of herself, of her clothes and everything she used in the place where she slept. She was tired of living, tired of the whole world and she could find nothing which she liked or loved and which could persuade her that it was worth staying with it. In all postures of the body she was always spitting, which was because of the "vision of loathsomeness" *(paṭikūla–saññā)* that was waiting there to remind her the whole time.

Venerable Ajaan then taught her with *mettā* and explained her situation to her, by talking directly and forcefully, which went straight to her heart so that the *upāsikā* realised and accepted that her understanding and ways of thought had been completely wrong and had deceived her into going beyond the limits of what is reasonable in Dhamma. She herself said:

> "From the time that I paid respect to Venerable Ajaan to receive his teaching and he asked me about what had happened, I had faith in him and told him and I have practised what he taught me, continually ever since. As for those experiences, they disappeared and have never returned again."

This story is worth thinking about for those who practise the way and who tend to have strange experiences. For this happens with a few people who frequently have such experiences, both those which are right and true as well as those which are wrong and false. If they have no *Ācariya* who is readily available, to advise and guide them, they may easily get wrong ideas and views, while at the same time believing that they are right. This is why *sati–paññā* is such an important aspect of Dhamma for those who practise the way of Dhamma at all levels and one should never let it be far away from oneself.

The way of practice in which people are too relaxed, easy and comfortable, which lacks precision and does not go into the detail of what is being done in the practice, may make them appear as sad and miserable in the eyes of others and a spectacle that arouses pity. This is because of their slick and

facile knowledge and understanding, and because of their tendency to spread it about to others without having first thought about it and examined it with circumspection before bringing it out and putting it to use. The practice and the results which such people get will not become outstanding, but will deteriorate, because their careless lack of circumspection gets into their practice and breaks it up.

The foregoing paragraph is something which those who practise Dhamma should take to heart and pay special attention to; and unless it is truly beyond the scope of their *sati–paññā,* they should not let it happen. This is due to the fact that Dhamma is not the same as the "world" for it is very much more subtle and profound. The standards which the world upholds in thinking, speaking and acting are not wrong. But if those who practise the way of Dhamma refuse to accord with Dhamma and go about thinking, speaking and acting in the manner of the "world", they are at once grievously wrong. Because the standards of the "world" and of Dhamma are quite different in regard to their gross vulgarity and subtle sublimity. For example, in the "world" they learn and teach things in various grades and levels in accordance with existing regulations and traditions, and when they are tested and examined they must receive a certificate or diploma to show and prove that they have passed such and such levels of learning. This makes it easy and convenient to find work which is associated with those subjects they have learnt and it gives them status and a good name in accordance with those conventions of the world which the world has decreed. But to practise the way of Dhamma by thinking, speaking and acting in the manner of people in the "world", such as, in the above example, by taking examinations, and by one's marks to establish that one has passed such and such a level — or that one has reached *samādhi samāpatti,* or *Arahatta–magga* and *Arahatta–phala,* would be to go contrary to the nature and customs of those who practise Dhamma. Then Dhamma would be turned into a thing of the world; in fact, even more coarse and vulgar than the normal way of the world. Instead of attracting people and eliciting their praises, due to the ways and actions of those who practise this Dhamma, it makes them wearied of it and disheartened.

In order for them to maintain a state of harmony and virtue, those who practise with the intention of attaining Dhamma which is a state of peace and certainty in themselves, should get into the way of calm. Even those who have attained the level of *Arahatta–phala* and know by way of: *"sandiṭṭhiko"*

or *"paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi"*[138] in their purity of heart, never make any outward display, like people in the world — which only comes from craving and "hunger". So in this way they uphold the honour, both of themselves and of Buddhism in the most subtle and gentle way without becoming involved in any disturbance. For such disturbance "creates waves that wash over the banks",[139] and this is nothing but the "way of the world", entirely, where there is none of the truth of Dhamma, not even the "outer skin", despite the claims of those who do this sort of thing. This is also what is meant by the "wearisome Dhamma".

Is it possible for other people to know who has accomplished Dhamma?

> Yes it is possible, by the way of reasoning, when answers are given to questions when two people who equally practise the way and who are of equal attainment talk together. It is also possible to know by the way that someone explains Dhamma in the field of practice concerning *citta–bhāvanā.* And it is also possible to know by the Dhamma explanation given to someone who has come to ask and learn about some point or aspect in his practice of *citta–bhāvanā* where he is stuck and cannot see his way through. This obstacle is at his own level of development and the explanation will be given at the same level until he understands and his doubts about that point are cleared away.

As an example of this, someone who practises the way may be stuck at the point where he is dealing with *avijjā* and he is truly in the position where he can get free from *avijjā,* but he does not know how the *citta* should act toward it so that it can get free from it at that moment. Someone who has already gone free from *avijjā* will probably answer him at once and with ease, and the one who is ready to walk free from the realm of *avijjā* will gradually understand the meaning of what he is told — or he may understand and go right through to freedom at that moment, due to the skilful way in which he is given the es-

138. This line is from the well known section of verses in praise of the Buddha, Dhamma and the *Sangha,* and is taken from the verse in praise of the Dhamma. *Sandiṭṭhiko* means: (the Dhamma) is known here and now in this life, and is not something that is unknowable, or only to be known after death. *Paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi* means: the Dhamma is known by the wise for themselves.

139. In this expression, "...wash over the banks" means going beyond the bounds or limits of morality or what is reasonable, as well as causing disturbances and contention in the world and in oneself.

sential data to clear the way. But if the *citta* of the Teacher has not yet attained freedom he will not be able to explain rightly or truly concerning this question about *avijjā;* and this is so even if he has learnt all about *avijjā.* Because the *avijjā* that he has learnt and remembered is not the same as the true nature of *avijjā* — they are not one and the same thing at all. One who knows the true *avijjā* has no doubts about it even though he may not have studied and learnt about its cunning deceptive tricks which are so widespread and many, nor would he be fascinated by and attached to *avijjā.* This is the same as someone who knows the true *Abhidhamma,* for even though he may not have learnt it or studied it widely, he has no doubts about it and he is not fascinated by, nor attached to it. This is very different from someone who studies *avijjā* and studies the *Abhidhamma* but who does not know the true basis of either of them. On the other hand, if he has both learnt and known them truly, he will understand them even though nobody told him anything. Because the one who does not understand and the one who understands these forms of Dhamma are actors on the same stage.[140] So he has reached the end of that path which wants to know and to see what those forms of Dhamma are like. This is like the owner of a cow who is looking for it and wants to find it. Then he sees the footprints of the cow and becomes fascinated and attached to following up its footprints. He goes on without giving up until he reaches the cow. But as soon as he has found the cow he immediately stops following its footprints.

When you, who read this come across some "forest eloquence", I hope you will excuse me, for I am strongly imbued with the "forest" and its wild ways, and lack of any rules or principles. Because within the forest Bhikkhus, there is nothing but the "wild Dhamma" that makes one's head spin and hardly any of the kind that makes one feel delighted. *So please practise it by yourselves until you realise it for yourselves. You will then become convinced and feel a satisfaction that you have accomplished something, far more than you ever will by reading and listening to others.* Because the understanding which comes from what others say, or from the text books is all within the field of discursive commentary. Before it is accepted and the heart can agree to believe it, there must be an intense internal struggle and a testing criticism of what has been heard or read. Sometimes one can even lose out to oneself, believing that oneself has the upper hand, because deciding or weighing up what one has heard or read is one's own opinion. For, generally speaking, we who follow the way *(Sāsana)* tend to send our thoughts out externally rather than going inwardly and the results which we get, tend to be in the direction of loss to oneself all the time.

140. That is, in the one *citta.*

The method which Venerable Ajaan used to cure his own citta and that woman's also, making it turn away from the seeing of loathsomeness *(paṭikūla–saññā)* which made him wearied of food, of life, and living in physical existence in his own body, which was the same as he taught that woman also, is a thing of great interest to all those who are liable to come across this problem which they may have to face up to one day. Therefore I shall relate some of what Venerable Ajaan said as far as I can remember it.

Venerable Ajaan said how that woman felt about food much in the same way as he had done. For he did the contemplation of the loathsomeness of food, both in regard to the fresh food mixed up in his bowl, and the old food mixed up in his body, and he compared the two together, taking the internal food as the basis of the comparison of loathsomeness. After having done this contemplation and comparing them together in full force and for long enough, the food in his bowl gradually seemed to change its nature from that which is wholesome and fit to eat until it became just as loathsome as the food inside the body. This was seen with absolute clarity and gave rise to a feeling of disenchantment and weariness which steadily increased. But fortunately at that time he was living alone, which meant that he was able to get down to examining this phenomena and to correct it with all his strength of ability over quite a long period of time. His *citta* then steadily gave way, accepted the truth, and he was able to eat normally. But the way he did this will be described later when we come to the way he taught that woman, for the basic Dhamma is the same in both cases. It seems however that after this experience, Venerable Ajaan was able to see the extraordinary versatility of the *citta* and how it can adapt to an endless variety of states and situations. This led him to improve the carefulness and thoroughness with which he did his investigation or research, beyond what he had been used to, with the aim of gaining greater subtlety and precision. He did this by using the method of changing about, using many tactics to attack the problem from different angles and levels, until he was satisfied and certain about it and no room was left for any mistakes to remain. His *citta* therefore must have continued to become steadily more clever and skilled at investigating without ever stopping.

When Venerable Ajaan went to stay at Wat Nong Peu, the above-mentioned woman came to him and told him of her experiences which were very like those which he also had experienced, so he took the opportunity to explain the situation to her. All the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* in the Wat left whatever

they were doing and also came to listen to this special Dhamma talk, which he gave by using his own experiences as the basis of his explanation. He said:

"This kind of thing that this lady has experienced, I also have experienced, and I have understood the tricky deceptiveness of the *kilesas* of the kind which act as impostors, disguising and obscuring their nature. To illustrate this: 'they are like great thieves who act as though they are good people in high society. Their clothes are good and they dress elegantly and stylishly as if they were Lord Sakka, the king of the gods, or Lady Sugātā from heaven and walking amongst people in society at all levels, without arousing any suspicions at all, that they are in fact beings from hell in the guise of people. So they can live and go about in comfort in a bold and stately manner, as though they were people of great wisdom, purity and impeccability — and this makes them difficult to catch out.' Because the function or organisation that produces such phenomena are beyond the ability of most people to notice and to question. Only those who have keen discernment, skilled wisdom, and who have been trained to know the tricks of these entities, especially in this particular way, can see through them; even as a police detective is fully up to the tricks of such a rogue and can catch him and bring him to justice. But with other people they play on their vanity until they have squeezed everything out of them."

"Such is the character of this group of *kilesas.* They wait their chance and penetrate into the Dhamma teaching of loathsomeness where wisdom has not yet reached nor penetrated, wherever they can. As for the intended purpose of the Dhamma practice, which investigates to see food as loathsome, its purpose is to cut off the greed and delusion associated with food which binds the *citta* to anxiety and melancholy states. But the practice of seeing loathsomeness is not intended to make people fast until they commit suicide, which is the way of these *kilesas,* for they overshadow the place where Dhamma is located so that they can go about doing what they want to do by going the way of the world, which is dragged along to aid and support them."

"But loathsomeness is also a factor of Dhamma, which means that whatever is loathsome is to be known as loathsome. As for those things that one has to depend on in this life, one just has to accept that one has got to depend on them throughout the life of these *khandhas.* So on the one hand,

there is the body which is a loathsome thing, and on the other hand there is food which is a loathsome thing also. As they are both loathsome they can come together in harmony and there is no cause for them to reject each other. One should not separate the two and refuse to take food, which is a mistaken view that follows the lead of those *kilesas,* of the kind which act as impostors, disguising and obscuring their own nature. But the one who does the investigation is the heart and it is quite separate and apart from those loathsome things, and is not soiled or stained by them in any way that should give rise to such disaffection and loathing that it cannot even consider them."

"Dhamma is always just sufficient and suitable in every aspect of Dhamma, and all the techniques of investigation into any part or thing is all for the purpose of getting Dhamma — which is a state of sufficiency, satisfaction, and not going against the grain. But investigating against the grain until food, the body and the heart cannot agree together, is precisely the way of the *kilesas,* and there is no doubt as to whether it is something that one should take up and go on developing or not. In fact one must then go on investigating until the external and the internal loathsomeness can be brought together while the heart remains happily in the middle."

"This is the right way and accords with the intended purpose of Dhamma, without any one-sided bias such as you have at present. In this way, loathsomeness is an instrument of Dhamma for curing that self-forgetfulness which assumes that: 'This thing is beautiful' and 'that thing is wonderfully tasty. How I love to eat it!' But once the investigation has been done until the *citta* has gone beyond this type of self-forgetfulness, who would want to dig up and carry all this loathsomeness into *Nibbāna*? For all this is just the path leading to *Nibbāna* — which is Dhamma that has no attachment or relationship with anything in the relative universe *(sammuti).* When the *citta* is attached to beauty, then one should take up the Dhamma of loathsomeness to cure it; when attached to hate one should take up the Dhamma of *mettā* to cure it; and when it is attached to greed, one should investigate one's own selfishness and self-opinionatedness until one sees it clearly, to cure it. But when one is attached to delusion — well — what is called delusion is very deep and profound and I can only give a brief explanation here, enough to point out the direction, which is to take up the *Opanayika–Dhamma*[141] — that is, to investigate and look at one's own heart that is sunk in delu-

141. *Opanayika–Dhamma* means: going inwardly, into oneself to see.

sion concerning those things with which it is involved. This is the way to know oneself and steadily to bring about a cure. If one gets caught up in anger then one should examine this anger which is an inward fire, burning oneself up first before spreading out to burn up other people. One should do so until one can see how baneful, wrong and harmful one's anger is. When one examines such things to cure them by going right to the spot where they are located, they gradually weaken and die away on their own because there is nothing left to support them, but only that which cools the passions. Where then can the *kilesas* get their food from to keep them well fed and fat so that they may live long into the future. When also there is nobody there who is ready to help them and develop them, they are surely bound to die like an animal without an owner."

"Have you ever seen in the story of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* how they acted? Did they promote or destroy the *kilesas?* What kind of result did they get from this; was it not something wonderful? And where is it possible to find people in the world who are their equal? But why then do we do nothing but promoting, supporting and looking after the *kilesas* with such an excessive concern for their well being while taking no interest nor giving a thought about ourselves, even when we are about to die. We want to have houses, buildings, department stores, halls, hundreds of storeys high, and all sorts of clothing, decorations and adornments; we even want to take the stars in the sky to decorate and beautify ourselves, to scintillate, catch the eye and touch the heart of the *kilesas* — which are insatiable. We want to amass money, silver and gold in a heap reaching to the sky so that from all points of the compass we can see this mass of wealth, belonging just to 'oneself alone'. Even when the place where one stays is so full of one's wealth, that there is nowhere left for the owner to live, to rest, to lie down and sleep, one accepts and puts up with the difficulties and inconvenience. All one asks is to have and to get whatever will satisfy the heart of the *kilesas.* As to having a wife or husband, however many women or men there are in the world, one wants to go about gathering them all up, so that they belong to oneself alone. Nor does one want to let anyone else become involved and be a nuisance, for that would upset the *kilesas* with their great greed, who are the masters of the world sitting on top of the heart."

"Well, what are you going to do? Are you going to go on fasting until you die by doing these counterfeit practices of seeing loathsomeness or are you ready to do what is reasonable, which is Dhamma with *sati* and *paññā* to

watch and to make sure that all aspects of the practice are done appropriately in the right proportions. I have also gone through just these experiences until everything seemed offensive and hateful. Therefore I can thus speak with full understanding without any shame or fear of anyone saying I am mad or anything else. This is the nature of the underlying or hidden knowledge of Dhamma and you must understand it from now on. Amongst those who practise *bhāvanā* and who get various kinds of knowledge and understanding arising in them, there are some cases in which a foreign Dhamma arises in them and they have nobody to warn and correct them until they become objects of pity in the eyes of Buddhists and other people as well, just due to this kind of knowledge."

"You however, are fortunate in that you have someone to warn you before you reach the point where you are ready to starve yourself to death. Or, to go about yelling out that you are disgusted with food, with your own body and with this world, which is full of things which are loathsome covering the ground which you always have to depend on so as to have a place to lie down, set up your pillow and your mosquito net — and how all these things emanate a bad and pervasive stench. In fact that stench does not exist. But it arises out of memory and thought which deceives you until it becomes a firmly fixed belief buried deeply and from which it is difficult to extricate yourself."

This is an appropriate summary of the answer which he gave to that woman who put her problem to him in the form of a question. Now, there is a bit more to it before finishing this story.

As soon as Venerable Ajaan finished speaking Dhamma to that woman she smiled brightly as if she was no longer the same person who had come to him burdened down with a load of suffering because of her aversion and disgust. This is all I can remember of the incident but I am afraid it is only a small part of it which is most unfortunate. For this Dhamma talk which told me things that I had never heard before from any other source, only came about by chance when Venerable Ajaan talked to this woman who brought her problems to him. Before this nobody had ever come to put this problem to him in circumstances where I was able to listen to such inspiring Dhamma. So I have called it, "Dhamma to Inspire the Heart," because it took hold of my heart, it was so indescribably elegant and the truth that he was displaying went right home. From that time on he never again brought up this subject to display to anyone else.

The Routine of Chanting

The following routine is very close to the mode of practice as done by Venerable Ajaan Sao and Venerable Ajaan Mun, meaning that under normal circumstances there is no formal meeting for the purpose of paying respect and chanting. The only exception are those days when the *Paṭimokkha*[142] is chanted, and then the regular chants are recited before the recitation of the *Paṭimokkha,* every time. But on other days, even if there is a meeting for the *Ācariya* to teach and train the Bhikkhus, when the time comes the Bhikkhus assemble together and the *Ācariya* goes straight into his explanation of Dhamma in the traditional way of those who practise.

Before and after the teaching by the *Ācariya*, anyone who has an unresolved question in his heart may ask him as he feels like it. As soon as he has finished asking, the *Ācariya* starts to explain and resolve the problem until the questioner understands clearly. Then after the *Ācariya* has given his talk, if there are no other questions or business to be discussed, they all pay their respects, the meeting ends and then all return, each one to wherever he is staying.

As far as I know, the reason why Venerable Ajaan did not institute any of the regular morning or evening chants when he called a meeting, was that he intended the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* to practise these chants and others on their own, as it suited them. He left it up to them to chant much, little or extensively in the texts as they liked and for as long as they liked, according to whatever each one found to be helpful and convenient. Therefore the practice of chanting which they did depended entirely on what each individual wanted to do, and it was a form of *bhāvanā* which each one did in himself, because they did their recollection of the chants internally and silently, without making a loud noise as is the case when they all do it together. Some of them were very good at it and could go on chanting for several hours. They used to say that they became pleasantly engrossed in the various aspects of Dhamma which they recited and it could take a long time before they got through the *suttas* which they chanted. Of the many chants that they knew they would choose whichever they felt like doing, whether the short *suttas* or the long ones.

In the days of Venerable Ajaan Sao and Venerable Ajaan Mun they very much liked chanting and each time they would go on for a long time. While chanting, the *citta* is not involved in anything else and one is happily absorbed

142. *Paṭimokkha* is the recitation of the 227 monks' rules, which are the core of the *Vinaya Piṭaka,* by one Bhikkhu amongst all the other Bhikkhus in the Wat. This takes place twice a month, approximately at the times of the full and zero moons.

in the aspects of Dhamma which one is chanting until the *citta* becomes calm and peaceful. Venerable Ajaan Sao and Venerable Ajaan Mun used to do a lot of chanting as they had always done since they first learnt them and they went on doing so until the end of their lives when they became very weak and sick and could no longer keep it up. When Venerable Ajaan started chanting, one could hear a gentle murmuring noise going on continuously without any breaks or hesitation until he reached the end of his chanting after a long time, and then he would go on by sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* until it was time for him to rest. So one can say doing the regular chanting was truly part of his routine.

But when we look at this present age — which is an age of "clever" people, the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* both those in the past and ourselves have all derived from the world of people, so we may also be "clever" and have different ideas from those in the past. Such as changing things and taking an easy way out — who knows? Therefore, paying homage and chanting which is a blessing of great benefit and a most appropriate virtue for oneself and others which the Teacher or *Ācariya* has recommended, may suffer a change in those who think that it is a waste of time and out of date. They may be afraid that it is liable to reduce and diminish the weakness and laziness which is steadily piling up on top of their hearts and that this will cut off the pleasure which is their nature and habit to derive all the time from such weakness and laziness. But for those who endeavour to strive and scramble up by doing the practice which has been taught to them, may they continue to uphold and exalt it, which is the appropriate response to the *mettā* and compassion with which the *Ācariyas* have always tried to train and teach their followers. One can see how this is true at those times when one of the Bhikkhus who had come under the umbrella of Venerable Ajaan's *mettā,* acted or behaved wrongly in some way either outwardly or inwardly. He would tell him off soundly and teach him whatever was needed in relation to what he had done; he would not leave him to "pickle" in that state until he started to "stink".

Various Customs and Ceremonies

I hope the reader will not mind me telling the whole truth in regard to this subject. Because *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* of this lineage tend to be rather old fashioned about the various ceremonies and customs of society. So when

they are invited to any functions or ceremonies, they are usually seen to be rather awkward and to appear to be embarrassed in ceremonial functions, such as, at funerals and the chanting that is done when they are invited out to eat in people's homes. When a group of them are invited out, whether all *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* or mixed with other Bhikkhus who are experienced and skilled in the ceremonies, the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* are shown up by their awkward and ungraceful ways. Sometimes the host cannot help feeling ashamed in the face of all the guests who have come to honour him by taking time off to come to the ceremony. But the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* are not used to the ways of society and all the formalities of these functions. For they have never had much occasion to get involved in society and their ceremonies, their time having been spent mostly in the forests and hills, and amongst villagers and hill people, who never have much in the way of ceremonies and formalities. So when they are invited to various functions in the towns and cities they generally behave in ways that are not right for the occasion in the way that the world conventionally expects. They do not know what hand they should use to hold the "holy thread", or to sprinkle "holy water", to hold the ceremonial fan or to take the *paṁsukūla* cloth with, so as to conform to the custom. Some have even been known to hold the ceremonial fan the wrong way round — with the front side towards them and the back to the audience. Then their own followers and the rest of the people who have come cannot bear to see it and must look elsewhere for they feel ashamed. But the Bhikkhu himself is relaxed and at ease as if nothing at all is wrong while the lay people cannot stand it and are burying their heads in shame.

Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus are like this, and I who am writing this am particularly prone to this sort of thing. For I am invited out frequently and I often let down my hosts and followers in this way. Generally when I am in Bangkok I am invited to funerals and other ceremonies and I plead with them not to invite me because I am almost bound to let them down with some faux pas or slip ups. Even so they won't listen and still invite me along, and in the end that's exactly what happens. But they don't learn, for they still go on eagerly inviting me out, all the time. Although my followers may be ready to put up with their *Ācariya* putting them to shame, he himself cannot put up with it, and so I don't like going to such functions. One can think of it as being like catching a wild monkey and letting it loose in society. How could it ever act gracefully and graciously? It is bound to end up causing embarrassment to all concerned including itself.

However much this happens, the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* do not remember how to do these things and they still keep on doing them all wrong, right up to the present day at every function they have to go to. When I think of my companions in Dhamma and all the *Ācariyas* who may be invited out to various functions in the towns and cities, I cannot help feeling embarrassed in anticipation of what they may do. For whatever happens I can say for sure that the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* of this lineage are bound to be like this when they are invited out, because I know very well how old fashioned and backward they are which is due to their never having learnt how to do all these things. So whenever they are invited out to any of these functions they are always bound to be like fish out of water practically every time and it makes no difference whether they have been in the order for a few or many years. Sometimes after the function has ended and the Bhikkhu is leaving the place, one of his lay followers who feels upset by his behaviour may go up to him and ask him very quietly, "Why did you do that? I felt really full of shame." But he does not even know what he has done wrong, so that the lay follower must quietly whisper to him and tell him what he should have done and how he must not do it in that way again because it is wrong and the others will all laugh at him. They talk together, saying: "Today I also felt very embarrassed when I saw him doing..., for the Bhikkhus here have never acted in that way." But the next time he goes out he makes some other blunder; in fact they are worse than children in this respect for they don't know or remember the right way to do these things. This is the manner of the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* of this lineage when they are invited out to perform in such functions and ceremonies.

> But when it comes to the *Vinaya* which is the traditional manner of behaviour and morality for Bhikkhus, they seem to be quite capable of putting it into practice correctly and precisely without making any mistakes like they do in ceremonial functions which are the traditional ways of behaviour that people in the world accept as being right. In fact it is praiseworthy that they do not become attached to these worldly traditions nor take any fixed attitude towards them in their hearts.

Sometimes their companions ask them teasingly about some of their faux pas, like the case of the Bhikkhu whom they saw holding the ceremonial fan back to front, with the decorated side facing himself, while he closed his eyes and gave the *sīla* (moral precepts) to the lay people, quite unconcerned and contented within himself. The other Bhikkhus who saw this could not help

seeing the funny side of it, but they had no way of telling him what was wrong because he was too far away from them. They just had to put up with their embarrassment and sit quietly until the end of the ceremony. When they left the place they said to him teasingly:

> "Ho! Today you gave a wonderful performance didn't you? Those who could bear to look at it almost died of shame."

That Bhikkhu didn't know what they were talking about and asked, "What wonderful performance?" So they told him:

> "You were holding the fan the wrong way round and you closed your eyes and gave the *sīla* completely unconcerned. If I didn't think it was a wonderful performance I would be really stupid, so I must commend you for upholding the honour of *Kammaṭṭhāna*."

The Bhikkhu looked a bit puzzled, smiled gently and said:

> "Did I really do that? I'm afraid I didn't think about which way round the fan was facing. All I knew was that I should take up the fan and hold it in front of me."

This is the way of those who are *Kammaṭṭhāna* monks, for they are liable to make embarrassing mistakes wherever and whenever they go out to ceremonial functions. If it is claimed that they show up deficiencies in this manner, they can do nothing but accept it, because in fact it is true; and I who am writing this here also made such mistakes many times in the past. This is due to the main emphasis of training which for *Kammaṭṭhāna* monks is quite different from that of others.

However, in regard to the *Vinaya* discipline, the *Kammaṭṭhāna* monks are quite strict and they are not afraid or disturbed when they go amongst other people in general. For they keep on training themselves and practising the way in all situations. As for the various customs and ceremonial functions, they rarely go to any, and they are not the kind of things which they find interesting. Therefore in such functions they always tend to be out of step and awkward. I, who am writing this have also done such things which have been embarrassing and upsetting. But I still keep on doing such things right up to the present day.

Having got to this point, I shall tell the story of how a *Kammaṭṭhāna* monk lost out once, to show how the ways of the forests and towns are different. In about the year 2476/7 BE (1933/4 CE) there was a *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu,* and it seems that since he was ordained he had never gone into the towns and cities. He liked staying in the forest all the time and had never studied the books and taken examinations like most other Bhikkhus do. He had only learnt the Five *Kammaṭṭhānas* and the thirty two parts of the body[143] from his teacher, after which he did the practice in the forest in company with his teacher and some companions, by using these methods to fix his attention firmly in *samādhi bhāvanā.* He was already forty years old and afraid that his body and mind *(sankhārā)* would not remain in a condition to support his practice for much longer and that he may die before he had attained. One day a friend who was also practising the way came and talked to him saying how he had heard that there were many *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* in Korat (the district of Nakhon Ratchasima) in fact more than usual, and there were many places that were suitable for doing the practice in the forests and hills south and west of Korat such as Kao Brig and Kao Yai. These places were very quiet and secluded, and very well suited to the development of *samādhi bhāvanā.* As soon as he heard this from his friend he wanted to go there and agreed to go along with him, considering that he was a guide who would lead him there.

When they got to Korat, they went to stay in Wat Sālawan which was a new Wat, having recently been built up and the Abbot was Venerable Ajaan Sing (Khantiāgamo). In the morning this Bhikkhu and his friend went out on the *piṇḍapāta* round in the town of Korat with the other Bhikkhus. It happened that day that one of the lay followers giving food put a wrapped up package of something in his bowl which he had never come across before, because he was a countryman from the Northeast of Thailand (Isaan) and there was little likelihood of his having come across anything like this. Soon after this package was put in his bowl he began to have grave doubts about it, because whenever he took off the lid of his bowl to receive food he was assailed by a strange and powerful smell. He was not bold enough to actually say anything about it to anyone, but it made him suspicious that the lay people who gave the food may have played a trick on him. He thought:

143. The Five *Kammaṭṭhānas* are: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth and skin. They are the body's five externally visible parts. The 32 parts of the body are: the above 5 plus 27 internal parts of the body. The first five parts are always taught by the preceptor at the ordination of a Bhikkhu. Also see footnote 10 on page 10 and footnote 1 on page 2.

"Can they really do this to me? I am a Bhikkhu who is free of malice and any desire to harm others whether people or animals and I have dedicated myself to this practice of striving for the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna*. It is not right for them to do such despicable things to Bhikkhus like me. Maybe some Bhikkhus did some bad things making themselves objects of loathing to the lay people which made them do this."

He went on brooding over it all the rest of the time he was on *piṇḍapāta*. Meanwhile the offensive smell continued to assail his nose every time he took off the lid from his bowl to receive gifts of food. He tried not to lose his composure so as to avoid showing anything outwardly to the people because he was a newcomer and when he came across anything like this he should put up with it. But as soon as he left the residential area he couldn't stand it any longer, so he opened his bowl and took out the offending package to have a look at what it was that had been troubling him all the time. When he opened the package of durian fruit which they had wrapped up and given to him with *saddhā,* he couldn't help exclaiming:

"For heaven's sake, I thought it was... which was giving out such a bad smell, that they had wrapped up to teach the Bhikkhus a lesson. And there I was, angry, disheartened and sorry all the way along, and all the time it was just this rotten jackfruit, three years and four months old influencing me until my heart turned away from the ways of a Bhikkhu and became such that I hardly had any *sati* for quite some time."

At the same time he threw the package of rotten jackfruit (which was in fact durian) into the ditch at the side of the road and then walked on happily and unconcerned and quite free of his previous doubts. He just made a mental note of how the fruit here seemed to be different from what he was used to, thinking:

"This rotten jackfruit is not like those I have seen at home, for however rotten the ones at home were, they never gave out such a strong and unbearable smell like the ones here. Whoever put it in my bowl, even though they had no bad intention towards the Bhikkhus, they must have been very unperceptive and inattentive to be able to put such a useless rotten jackfruit in the bowl of a Bhikkhu, making him put up with the smell while walking along."

He must have been thinking a lot about this incident, because he told the Bhikkhu who came with him all about it that afternoon, starting off by saying:

> "Why is it that this province and the one we have just come from have such different climates even though they are both part of Isaan (the Northeastern region), so that even the same kinds of fruit have quite a different smell?"

"What fruits are different and in what way?" the other Bhikkhu asked him.

> "The jackfruit at home, even when they have become completely rotten and inedible don't give off a very bad smell, whereas although I haven't seen the ripe ones, those that they put in our bowls this morning — you must have got some as well — they had such a bad smell, I couldn't stand it all the way back to the Wat and I threw it away in the ditch. Didn't they give you some of this jackfruit also? You must have got some as you were in front of me."

> "What they put in our bowls this morning eh!? That wasn't jackfruit! Good grief! It seems that you have never seen a durian before, and that was what you threw into the ditch, was it?"

> "Yes, because I couldn't stand it any longer, why should I go on carrying it about?"

The other Bhikkhu said:

> "For heaven's sake! Don't you know what a durian is? What they put in your bowl this morning was durian — the most expensive fruit in Thailand. People who are poor and unfortunate can cry their eyes out for the taste of it, but you just throw it away. And the people who gave it, went out of their way to get it and put it in your bowl with true *saddhā.* Why did you throw it away? You should have at least asked someone else about it before throwing away something valuable like that. Haven't you ever seen durian before?"

> "No, this is the first time I have come across it — this morning, and I almost fainted with the smell. People may say it's wonderful and special as much as they like but I have a nose and it's not going to let anyone fool me

about it. This morning I knew it with my own nose until I couldn't stand it any longer and threw it away, so how can you praise it as being ripe and wonderful. You ought to know that the nose of a person is not the same as that of a dog. For the nose of a dog would tell it one thing, but people are more clever than dogs and that they should take up a dog's understanding in place of the understanding of a person, I cannot agree with. This fruit is just like..., and regardless of how expensive it may be I wouldn't accept it even if it was given freely to me. Otherwise why should I have thrown it away — only because I couldn't stand it and so I took this way out."

The other Bhikkhu smiled in an amused way and said:

"You can't have been born complete. You see something good and valuable and don't know that it is good — in fact you think it is false. I can't think of any other way to explain it to you."

The "rotten jackfruit" Bhikkhu just smiled, but the way he spoke was quite adamant, and he took no notice of what the other Bhikkhu said in praise of the durian which he was given.

From what has been said up to now, it is likely that the reader will think that the true *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* is ready to listen to what others have to say at any time. But in some cases they will not listen to anyone, and then they are likely to argue forcefully while firmly maintaining their standpoint — such as the above "rotten jackfruit" Bhikkhu. So it seems that the forest people and Bhikkhus are very different from the people and Bhikkhus who live in the villages and towns, to the extent that in coming across a durian, he could think that it was a rotten jackfruit and then throw it away in the ditch. If he had been more observant and thoughtful, appropriate to the blame he levelled at others, saying that they were unobservant and inattentive, he might have tried carrying it in his bowl with the lid closed until he got back to the Wat and could ask someone else about it before throwing it away. For the way he did it was the way of one who has no wisdom.

But really, one cannot help feeling some sympathy for this Bhikkhu who had never seen durian fruit, due to his having lived in the forest when communications were so very different from what they are now, and he had never had any opportunity to see unusual things, like we have nowadays. This is how the forest Bhikkhus are bound to be when they are invited out into the towns and cities, they still have the characteristics of the forest Bhikkhu who

came across a rotten jackfruit. But the type of *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who is so clever and up to date that he sets one's teeth on edge may also be mixed up in them in the same way as are good and evil. Although whether it is too old fashioned or too clever and modern, it is most likely to be inappropriate and unseemly in both cases, because it does not accord with the principles of the "Middle Way of Dhamma", which is truly sufficient and appropriate. But to be old fashioned like the above Bhikkhu, makes one feel sorry for him.

Discussions of Dhamma

Up to the present time, the conversations that take place between *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* has always been something that supports faith and is a valuable opportunity for those who are listening to learn. As it says in the *Mangala Sutta, "Kālena dhammasākacchā etammangalamuttamaṁ" — (Discussing Dhamma at the right occasion is one of the greatest blessings).* Because the behaviour and attitude, which each one of them displays and which is most admirable, comes from their aim of attaining the truth and Dhamma and the value and help that they may get from what they learn by asking questions of each other. It is also regardless of the conventions of who is more senior in the number of *vassa* (years) they have been in the order.

In regard to the above, I who am writing this would like to express my admiration for the Dhamma conversations *(Dhammasākacchā)* which they have, and which follow the ways of the truly wise and leads one to have faith in them. This is completely different from the manner of those — of whom merely to see them makes one feel disheartened — and as time goes on, they are becoming more and more widespread to the point where some Bhikkhus have called such conferences as they indulge in: "Conferences of spittle in flood".

If however there is a Dhamma conference which conforms to the ways of "Dhamma conversation" *(Dhammasākacchā),* it should reach a reasoned conclusion and full acceptance. This is said with full knowledge of the fact that we Buddhists still variously have *kilesas* in us, but we are also intent on the truth and Dhamma. So when I know of good or evil of any kind, I have put down whatever comments and criticisms come from other people. For when one only criticises oneself, it is not likely to do much in the way of stirring up one's *kilesa* of self-opinionatedness and one has to depend on other people to

help one do this. If one is intent on truly cleaning out the bad things within oneself, one should be able to get value from both praise and blame. Therefore I have written about both what is right and good as well as what is wrong and evil in *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus,* because I hope that value will be gained from both sides. But I am certainly not offering criticism for the purpose of bringing discredit and harm to anyone at all.

What makes the Dhamma conversation of the *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* really praiseworthy is their intended purpose, which is to pick up hints and teachings from the True Dhamma which each of them gives forth without any conceit or opinionatedness at all, even though they variously still have *kilesas* within them. For they talk based on the ground level *(bhūmi)* of their *cittas* and of the Dhamma which arises out of the *citta bhāvanā,* which they have been practising. So they may talk about *Khaṇika Samādhi,* or *Upacāra Samādhi,* or *Appaṇā Samādhi,* depending on what level their practice has reached. And if they have any doubts, they ask about them one after another, while those who understand answer them and clear each problem one by one until they fully understand.

It is much the same in the field of *paññā* which has different levels in the same way as *samādhi.* For if any of them has a problem concerning *paññā* at any particular level, in connection with whatever they are currently investigating and they cannot get past this point, one who understands or who has already gone past this point will explain it point by point. He will explain it just where this Bhikkhu is unsure of the way, until he understands it in the same way as the other levels which he has already understood.

These Dhamma conversations amongst *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* which take place in accordance with the various levels of Dhamma are quite delightful, because the questions come out of the heart of the questioner who has been doing the practice and has experienced various things, and the answer also comes from the heart of one who has done the practice and experienced the same sort of things. Both of them have seen for themselves the true facts which have come from their practice, and this is an opportunity for them to go on gaining more and more from it. One day one Bhikkhu talks about one thing; another day or time another Bhikkhu talks about another thing. So they keep changing about continually passing on what they know to others. Because different Bhikkhus practise differently and know about different aspects of the practice, both inwardly and externally.

In these Dhamma conversations which arise from knowing within the heart, even though the one who explains his situation and asks questions may be very much junior to the other in years *(vassa),* he tells his story and asks his questions with a sure confidence and a certainty in what he knows and asks about. He has no fear, nervousness or anxiety, apprehensive that the other Bhikkhu will question him or pick holes in what he has said. He just speaks and asks in accordance with the way he feels, and both sides are ready to accept whatever is reasonable. If at any point the reasoning is still unacceptable, they go over that point, hammering out the meaning until it is properly understood. Then they can go beyond it, without either side gaining or losing any status or virtue, which is what happens when the "way of the world" is hidden in Dhamma, for then it departs from the hope of gaining understanding from each other. But the correct way is, that whether right or wrong in any way, the one who reveals himself or asks the questions does so in whatever way he feels to be appropriate and which explains what he has experienced, without being afraid of being wrong. Those who are listening to him set themselves to listen to the point which that Bhikkhu has brought up as a question and they are not interested in anything more than the Dhamma question which is right before them. Whoever is talking and listening, all of them are willing to listen attentively to the Dhamma of each other from beginning to end in an even manner, without showing any sign of boredom, contempt or dissatisfaction with the level of *citta* and Dhamma of each other. All of them talk together with a purity of heart, with a real hope that they may gain knowledge and assistance from each other. When the one who has brought up his story and asked his question gets some disagreement at any point from those who are listening to him, this point must become a problem for his homework, a problem which he must immediately start thinking about so as to correct it and adjust his understanding until he feels sure about it and until the problem has been resolved to his full satisfaction and does not contradict the *Ācariya* who showed him the way. In addition, he must understand the question in the way the *Ācariya* has explained it, before he can let go of it and pass beyond it. Generally speaking, any of them who meet with disagreement do not feel disheartened about it, but rather tend to become even more interested and concerned about such a question. In this way, the Dhamma conversation amongst those who also practise in this same way is likely to bring blessings to them, even as it says in the verse of Dhamma: "Dhamma conversation at

the right time is one of the greatest blessings.” But conversation which is an enemy or which destroys what is expressed in the foregoing Dhamma verse, which in *Pāli* is: *“Kālena dhammasākacchā etammangalamuttamaṁ”*, is likely to be of the kind which arouses the *kilesas* or the type which takes pride in the *kilesas* rather than being directed towards anything useful in Dhamma. But this that I have written just accords with the ways of the forest. So please don’t take it too seriously because the word “forest” or “the wilderness” proclaims its nature without needing to say any more.

Whatever will bring benefit to oneself by way of Dhamma, in any way, is a way that one should try to scoop up with all one’s strength and effort. For even though the way may be subject to the criticism and blame of others who have *kilesas* of the kind which like to criticise so as to raise up themselves, or to destroy others, rather than for the sake of Dhamma, they will not be able to eradicate that way. If it was possible for them to eradicate that way or method, the Lord Buddha who practised the way in the midst of the exponents of all sorts of different views and opinions, which should be called “the storehouse of *kilesas*”, would most likely not have been able to slip through them and become the Great Teacher of all us Buddhists. Only truth can triumph over all falsehood, which means that because of truth one can triumph over self and the world. One cannot get away from truth, and those who are firmly connected to Buddhism should also be firmly committed to truth — which is the heart of Buddhism.

Therefore Dhamma conversation and any of the ways of practising Dhamma, when they are actually done, can make the *kilesas* afraid and dispel them from the heart. So doing those things is a blessing to oneself, although the *kilesas* will not see it as a blessing — though this is not a problem. But generally we tend to make ourselves a blessing to the *kilesas* rather than to ourselves and we should beware of this kind of blessing if it arises frequently, because it may be dragging us down even while we think we are progressing. This is the way of those who are crooks, who cheat, rob or swindle to gain the wealth of others and turn it into their own wealth and blessing, thinking that they are clever and have a lot of merit and virtue. They pride themselves that they must have powerful and good tendencies of *kamma,* which has brought them a heap of money as big as a mountain and they pore over their accounts of the money they have in the bank every day without fail. But in truth, the whole of this is only a “blessing” which lasts as long as they are still breathing, a “blessing of clay” stuck to their heads which will lead them to ruin

and disintegration. All those who are wise and know the way, have no doubt whatsoever as to what kind of "blessing" this is.

To judge what is a true blessing, the *Ācariyas* have taught that one should judge one's motives for doing whatever actions one does, to see in what way they tend at all times throughout the day, and day by day. These actions will manifest in one's body, speech and mind variously on each occasion, and whether they give rise to blessings or the opposite, which are the results that come from them, will depend on and accord with these actions, which cannot be separated from those results.

From what has been said above, the blessing of Dhamma talk which accords with the characteristics of happiness *(sukha–lakkhaṇa)* in the heart, would seem to be a joyful thing in those who practise the Dhamma, which they talk about in the manner of *Dhammasākacchā.* This is the result which each of them gets and which accords with the above Dhamma verse and it is a method which steadily brings relief and dispels the *kilesas* within them.

There are times when it so happens that a number of the Bhikkhus come from the hills and the forests which give them happiness and contentment of heart and they all meet together at the same time. An occasion such as this is a good opportunity for them to discuss various aspects of Dhamma together, in addition to which they have a longing to do so, for this is a rare occasion that only happens once in a long time. To begin with there will generally be questions from the more junior Bhikkhus, with the most senior Bhikkhus starting off the proceedings with some preliminary talk and asking the first Bhikkhu to start off with the way of practice — which means his *citta bhāvanā* as he has experienced it. When he has finished giving an account of his practice, the senior Bhikkhu may sometimes question him and make some comments and add some Dhamma explanations to correct him in some places and to emphasise the Dhamma which he had understood correctly, so as to bring out its full scope and implications. The other Bhikkhus whose turn had not yet come would be sitting quietly while listening with calm hearts so as to pick up ways and means from the talk between the first questioner and the one who is waiting to explain. This conversation which takes place is most strange and wonderful, for one would never have thought that the Dhamma could be practised by different people in so many different ways with such a variety of different experiences in all sorts of ways and directions. Yet, when they talk it turns out that it can all be interpreted in terms of Dhamma, such as I have

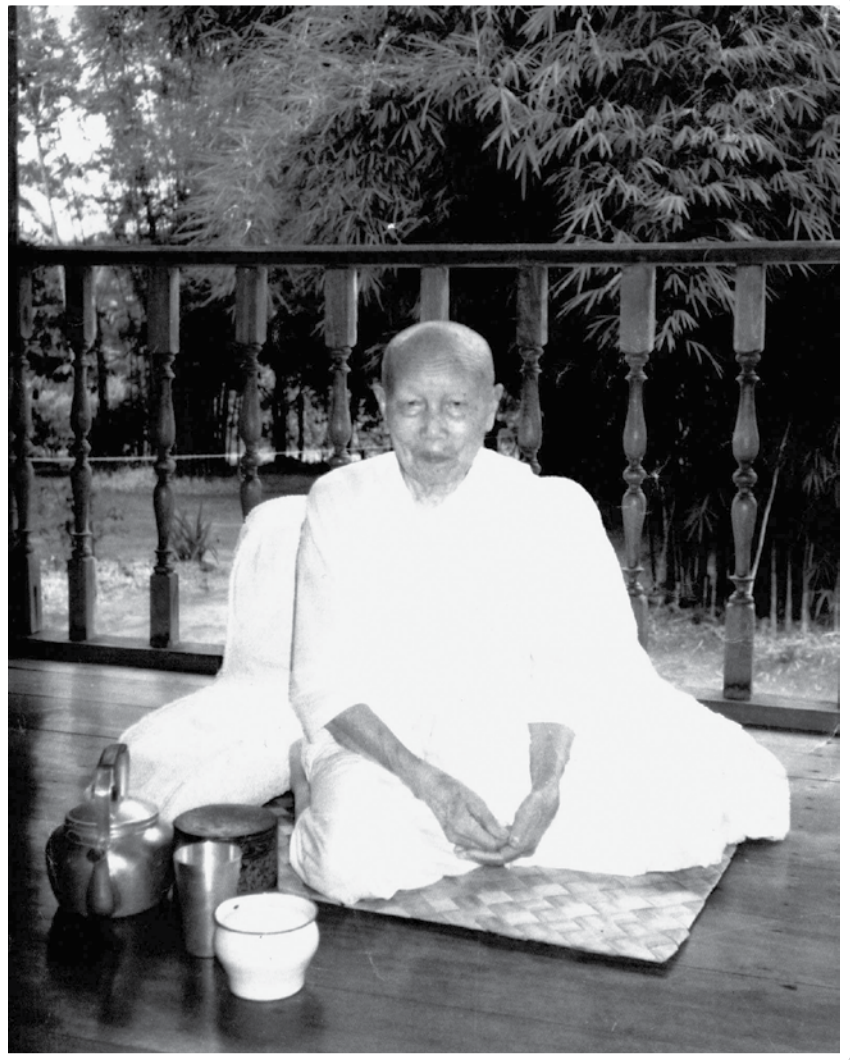
experienced in some aspects. As if our hearts were all together as one, and the Dhamma is also one and the same. For the Dhamma has many aspects, and the heart has many spheres, and since each person has a heart one should hardly expect there to be such unanimity and harmony as in fact there is. But whether they speak of the *Bhūta* and ghosts, of the *Devatā,* about the Dhamma Truths in some of its aspects, about the methods of *paññā* (wisdom) in some of its aspects, or about various different kinds of *kilesas,* they can all understand each other, as if they all saw it together at the same moment. Therefore all those present, whether sitting and listening, whether talking or asking questions, or those who were listening to make a critical evaluation, all of them would probably gain something useful and valuable from the question in the same way as if the Bhikkhu who was making comments was pointing at each one of them for them alone to hear individually. The only exceptions would depend on the ability of each one of them who was listening, for depending on the level of their ability, they may or may not be able to understand some parts of it. But when they listen to the explanations which are directly in answer to the questions and problems which are put forward, all of them who are listening are able to gain value from them, because all of them are in the same basic situation that should enable them to gain value equally. This is like those instances which we can read about in the texts when the Lord Buddha was setting right and elucidating a question concerning Dhamma which someone had asked him. At the same time there were others present who were able to benefit from what he taught, even to the extent of attaining the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* in some cases, although it was someone else's question and the answer was given to that person. This can happen because Dhamma is neutral and quite impartial to the world. So it can give value to anyone who is able to receive it, regardless of the time or place of those people who are in the right basic situation to be able to accept it.

A Dhamma conversation which takes place at a time when several Bhikkhus are sitting together is likely to be of value to all who hear it. However there are many types of question or problem which may be about external or internal things of endless varieties, some of which can be made public and others which should not, for they may be difficult or inappropriate to discuss in public. But whatever type of question it is, the questioner should know for himself whether it is the type which may be revealed for others to hear, or whether it should be reserved for an opportunity when he can discuss it privately with his Teacher at a suitable time.

All these questions or problems are concerned only with *citta bhāvanā*. For when one is practising the way all the time in all sorts of situations, in the spheres of both *samādhi* and *paññā*, questions and problems are bound to arise all the time, regardless of one's situation. When problems or Dhamma of some kinds arise from the heart, the "owner" will know the answer for himself right away. There are other kinds which, when they arise, the "owner" will have to spend some time investigating them before he understands and can pass them by, one by one. But there are also other kinds of problems which arise and the "owner" has no knowledge of how to cure and correct them, so he must depend on someone else to help and advise him. Some of the problems that arise concern things which are critical and dangerous and he must solve them quickly. If he cannot deal with them himself, he must hurry off to find a Teacher — an *Ācariya* — who can help and correct him, otherwise if he just leaves it alone it may lead him into false delusions and spoil him entirely.

But whatever problem arises, mindfulness and wisdom are factors of Dhamma that are essential in every case for curing or promoting the problems which arise in oneself. One must bring mindfulness and wisdom in to test and examine, so as to become quite certain that one understands where one thinks one is right or wrong, by way of reason. But not by understanding or mere fancy which is based on one's own emotional bias and which one then grasps and holds on to, believing it to be true. Before one is ready to accept the answer to each problem, it must be proved by wisdom using the ways of reason. This is why *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* go in search of the *Ācariyas* and respect them and have faith in them and listen closely to what they say, which is quite different from the way of study Bhikkhus. Because the questions and problems which arise from *citta–bhāvanā* are specific and important and they must be dealt with only by an *Ācariya* who has gone through the same things himself, for him to be able to resolve them. Someone who has never practised *bhāvanā* cannot be expected to resolve them, even though he may have studied the texts extensively, for the problems that arise from *citta bhāvanā* are, generally speaking, not directly in line with what is learnt by study. Supposing a problem is described in a concealed and roundabout fashion, one cannot say that it is completely at variance with what is learnt by study, but nor can one say that it is the same thing. This is why there are great difficulties for those who have never gone beyond the level of study to investigate and find the truth. For talk of this kind, as I have described it, will probably not be

understood by those who have never come across it before and never practised *bhāvanā.* In fact they are quite likely to laugh at it while saying that this is just the uneducated way of those who live in the wilds and that it lacks any basis. But the truth is as I have described it amongst those who practise the way. As for those Bhikkhus who have had some results from the principles of *bhāvanā,* they will immediately understand as soon as the truth is revealed to them.



Venerable Khun Mair Kaew

17

How Questions Differ in Samādhi & Paññā

The word "question" or "problem" above is a general way of speaking and it does not give any clear indication of what kinds of questions or problems are involved; nor how they arose, or under what circumstances. So I will give some words of explanation which should be enough to show the way to those who do the practice of *citta bhāvanā.* For this can be something to think about as a way to overcome their problems when they arise, by grasping and relying upon the principles which have been laid down, as a way to test and try to bring about a cure.

The problems that arise in the fields of *samādhi* generally arise in those cases in which the *citta* has already become calm and then it draws back from this state and comes to know all sorts of things of endless varieties with which it gets involved. In order to overcome this difficult problem, which is beyond one's ability in the early stages shortly after one has developed the practice, one should turn the *citta* back and go inwards into the state of *samādhi* entirely, without getting involved in probing and thinking about those things which become manifest at all. Then whenever the *citta* goes down into a state of calm one should have mindfulness to watch and take care of the *citta,* causing it to remain in that calm state and preventing anything from putting pressure on it to leave this state and go outside. Such as for example, suggesting that it should fly up into the sky, or to go on a tour of the hells, the heavens and paradise, or play about in *samādhi* by thinking of doing things like wanting to look into the *cittas* of other people when one's own *citta* is calm. Things such as these disturb and excite the *citta,* making it move about and go out towards external objects and situations *(ārammaṇa).* Instead, one should let the *citta* remain calm and happy with the objective situation which is there within the *samādhi* — this being the state of calm present at that time. One can admire

this calm and happiness with a pure heart without anything disturbing and inciting one and causing trouble and bringing up questions and problems uselessly; because it is not yet the right time and one has not yet reached the level of development to be able to know and gain value from such questions. For instance, wanting to know whether good and evil are true things, and whether hell, heaven and *Nibbāna* are true facts, or not. All such questions are nothing but self-indulgence — or, indulgence in the world within one. So one should develop *samādhi* and *paññā* — which is the way to know good and evil, to know heaven and hell, and to know *Nibbāna* — and to make it firm and strong. These things will not be beyond the ability of the heart which does the training well. Or if the training has already been done well, it can go ahead and is bound to know them clearly for itself by experience rather than by guesswork and mere thinking, which is a way of dealing with problems that damages the heart. We should realise that those who have told us and pointed out what is good and evil, heaven, hell and *Nibbāna* make us, who hear about these questions, speculate and use guesswork until we go wrong in the head. Like a child who climbs onto the roof of his home and jumps off holding on to an ordinary umbrella to break his fall, and ends up breaking his legs and getting concussion. But the true *Ācariyas* know them by the fundamental principles in their hearts and in Dhamma,[144] and this is what enables them to know and to see. Therefore, they know clearly, speak clearly and can point out the way clearly without making mistakes or deviating from the truth. But even though the truth of those things is available in the true knowing and seeing of the *Ācariyas,* we still use false guesswork.

One thing that is undeniably right about us is how silly and nonsensical we are, how we lack any essence of truth *(sāra)* and how we deny that those things — such as good and evil, and the rest — have any existence. So we act accordingly and make and accumulate *kamma,* piling it up on ourselves until we can hardly bear the burden. But even then, we are still foolhardy enough to make the same assumptions and to go on disputing the existence of these things with the view, which we hold tightly and intimately, that there is noth-

144. "... fundamental principles in their hearts and in Dhamma..." is a translation of the Thai: "luk jy luk Dhamma". "Luk Jy" means that the principles concerning the heart are known by experience and are therefore a set of guiding principles. As for example, in driving a car, one who has often done so, has the principles of driving well established. These principles then help and guide him in what to do when driving a car in the future. "Luk Dhamma" is similar in that the understanding derived from questioning and investigating with wisdom in its various levels acts as a guiding set of principles as to how to view and react to events that arise in life.

ing beyond death and there is therefore nothing which remains and goes on into the future to receive the results of all this *kamma.* We never think how those who have been born into this world all complain about the suffering and discontent here. If all the complaints about the sufferings and discontent, which weigh down on beings until they can not find a way out, were to give out a loud noise like thunder and explosions, all people in the world would probably have died of broken hearts long ago. Because the loud explosive sounds of their complaints would have resonated around the material world and there would be no corner of it, or time in which it would be possible to breathe freely. But as it is, most people complain about the discontent in their hearts without knowing about *kamma* and how *kamma* brings back to them the results which come from their past to arise in the present and in the endless future. But then if they cannot see the ways of *kamma* here, in what realm of heaven or hell will they ever learn to accept it?

I who am writing this, also live in this realm of *dukkha* in the same way as everyone else, but I don't have enough wisdom to show them how to see *kamma* and its results as well as the place where those who have *kamma* must experience the results of it. All I can say is that wherever there is *dukkha,* there also is the manifestation of *kamma,* and those who are free of *dukkha* are also free of *kamma* — like the Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* who have come to the end of *dukkha.* So *kamma* has no power to follow them and force them to accept its results, as it does with all those in the world who like to complain about it.

Where I have written about those questions concerning such things as thinking about the heavens and hells in the foregoing discussion, these are the basic kinds of problems which do harm to the mind. One should be very cautious and one should not be overly concerned about such questions. Rather, one should try to make one's heart know clearly and see through everything that is concealed and obscured. If one goes to see and know for oneself, nothing remains covered and one is bound to know for sure. For such things as these do not hide themselves, and they are not concealed or obscured at all, apart from the way that the world conceals and obscures them. People in the world have the eye to see — that is, the inward eye — and if they open it, they will see for themselves.

The *samādhi citta* may give rise to questions in many ways. But wisdom is the "embankment or dam" which holds them back, so that no questions of

any kind can get past it. If it is put into use one is bound to see results from it straight away.

But in the early stages of practice, one should not promote thoughts which give rise to tricky and complex questions and problems before they even start to arise on their own, in the way mentioned above. Generally and normally, if the *citta* has interest only in the aspect of Dhamma contained in the preparatory meditation *(parikamma)* and it integrates in calm, going down into a state where it dwells with calm and happiness, none of these questions and problems are likely to arise and bother the *citta* causing it disturbance and distraction. The tendency to think in ways that are quite irrational is therefore always likely to create a lot of anxiety in oneself. There are many problems associated with the way of *samādhi,* but this is enough for the moment and we must turn and consider the problems associated with wisdom *(paññā)*.

The Story of Khun Mair Kaew

Before explaining the problems that arise in the way of wisdom, I should write about some of the results of the problems, associated with *samādhi* which has been well developed, as examples for the reader to think about. Because the basis of *samādhi* and the various problems, which arise from *samādhi* in those who have venturesome *cittas,* will probably be of great value, once they have been trained in the right way — and then they will be able to put them to use in unusually deep, profound and extensive ways. An example of this may be seen from the biography of Venerable Ajaan Mun, for he was an *Ācariya* whose *citta* was bold and venturesome while he was in the stages of training and discipline, and then became a master after he had completed his training.

But the following story refers to a woman,[145] who was a follower of Venerable Ajaan, and who had received training from him, when she first started to practise. She is still alive today and lives as a white robed *Upāsikā.* Her *citta* tends to be venturesome and is similar to that of Venerable Ajaan Mun in many respects, so this is a suitable place to reveal this story as food for thought for those who practise the way, to think about and to extract the "essence" from it as it suits themselves and as far as they are able to.

145. This *Upāsikā* has since died. Her name was Khun Mair Kaew (Venerable Mother Kaew) and it was thought by many people that she was an Arahant.

When this woman was a young girl, Venerable Ajaan Mun stayed for one rains retreat period *(vassa)* near her village with a large company of Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras*. It seems that this was the first time that this village had as many as forty or fifty monks and novices staying nearby for the *vassa*. There were a number of elderly Bhikkhus there, who had been in the robe for many *vassa* already and who were followers of Venerable Ajaan, who spent the *vassa* there with him. There was also one Bhikkhu who had skill in *paracittavijjā* — knowing the *cittas* of other people — and he had the duty of helping Venerable Ajaan to catch out those Bhikkhus who were skilful at "robbery" (i.e. those Bhikkhus whose *cittas* liked to steal away to think of other things and to wander away from the path). Sometimes, when Venerable Ajaan was about to give a Dhamma talk at night, so as to give teaching to the Bhikkhus, he would tell that Bhikkhu, who was skilled at the *paracittavijjā,* saying:

> "Today I want you to help me a bit to put down the thieves! While giving a Dhamma talk I don't have much chance to trap and catch these thieves. For even though I can do it, it is not as efficient as waiting to catch them at the door (waiting prepared and ready to catch the *cittas* of the others present, which slip away into wayward thoughts at a time when there is no business intruding and calling for their attention). Since I shall be active in giving a Dhamma talk, I will not have much chance to think of anything else, for by the time I should have turned my *citta* to examine and catch the thieves, they would have stolen away a large hoard of things and returned to normal and I would have no chance to catch them in the act. So I would like you to help me a bit to catch them in the act, for these thieves are very skilled at slipping out when I am occupied with other essential business. Try to catch the really skilled ones which are most clever at it!"

After that, Venerable Ajaan would start to give a Dhamma talk without taking any notice of anything else. After a short while a thief would slip out and wander about in his usual way. Then he would hear the Bhikkhu, who was on 'duty' keeping the thieves down, speak to him saying:

> "Venerable...! Why are you thinking like that?"

Venerable Ajaan would stop his Dhamma talk for a short while to help and give some weight in quelling the thieves, saying: "That's exactly the way to

do it so as to outwit these rogues who are so quick and slick." Then he would continue with his Dhamma talk.

After a short while another thief would come out somewhere else. Again the "duty" Bhikkhu would catch it, saying:

> "Venerable So and So, why are you thinking like that? Bring your *citta* back and fix it within you. Don't let it go out and think about all sorts of things for that's the wrong way to go."

The thief returned, afraid of that Bhikkhu, and frightened by what had happened, did not dare to go out wandering about everywhere in its accustomed way after that.

The duty Bhikkhu only had to warn a few of them for all the "outlaws" to become quiet and the effect was obvious. But in some cases they became very afraid of the duty Bhikkhu from that time on and from then on they did not dare to let the *citta* go out wandering much, as they had in the past. But just why Venerable Ajaan chose to tell the 'duty' Bhikkhu to do this on some occasions and what the full meaning of it was, we were never able to find out, because he never said anything about it. As for the 'duty' Bhikkhu who helped Venerable Ajaan on these occasions, at other times when he was not told to do anything, he acted as if he did not know or see anything; in fact, almost as if he knew nothing. But all the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* were more afraid of him than anyone else except Venerable Ajaan Mun.

What I have written above has led me away from the main theme — almost worse than those Bhikkhu thieves. So now it is time to go back to the story I started to write about.

Before that young girl started to do any meditation practice she used to visit the Wat with the other villagers quite regularly. Then when Venerable Ajaan went to spend the *vassa* there, he taught her to do meditation practice and explained how she should do it at home. Whenever any results came from her practice she was to report them to him so that he could tell her what to do next.

After she had been ordained as an *Upāsikā,* she told me how:

> "After he had told me what to do and then told me many times that I should do the meditation practice, I thought to myself with some surprise that I may in fact have some inherent ability *(vāsanā)* in me after all. For

Venerable Ajaan has been exceptionally kind to me all the time. If there was nothing of value in me, why should he show any interest in me, for I am just an ordinary village girl, rather like a faithful old dog and no more? So from now on I should do the practice in the way that he has so kindly taught me."

She said that Venerable Ajaan gave her the practice of using the repetition of "Buddho". One evening, after she had finished her evening meal she got herself ready and went into her bedroom early. Her intention was to get down to some *bhāvanā* and to do it truly and properly as Venerable Ajaan had taught. After she had paid homage to the *Ti–saraṇa,* she started to do her practice in the way that Venerable Ajaan had taught her. She started repeating the preparatory meditation *(parikamma–bhāvanā),* "Buddho, Buddho…" and went on for about fifteen minutes when her *citta* became calm and integrated and went down. But she did not realise that her *citta* had integrated because she had never had any experience of it in the past and this was the first time it had happened. When her *citta* integrated and went down, it was if she fell down to the bottom of a well in an instant and everything disappeared into silence for a short time. Then it seemed to her that she had really died, for she could see clearly an image of her own body, dead, right in front of her. It was so real that she was quite sure she was seeing her own dead body right there in front of her. But the thought that came to her then was:

"Oh my! I'm dead! Who'll cook the rice to put into the Bhikkhu's bowls tomorrow instead of me? When Venerable Ajaan goes round on *piṇḍapāta* and he doesn't see me putting rice in the bowls he'll ask about me, and who'll answer and tell him that I died while sitting in *bhāvanā* tonight?"

Then she made up her mind, thinking:

"All right, if I'm dead, I'm dead! Everybody in the world, and all other living things in this world are bound to die in the same way as I have. Nobody is free from death; even an Emperor ruling the whole world is also bound to die in the same way."

Having made up her mind in this way, she turned her attention back to her own dead body which was apparently lying there in front of her and which

had not faded, altered or changed in any way, as if to make her realise that her body was definitely dead. While she was pondering the fact of her own death without having reached any conclusions, the villagers came and picked up the body and carried it to the charnel ground. As soon as they reached the charnel ground she saw Venerable Ajaan Mun with all the Bhikkhus there, walking towards the corpse which was lying there. Then Venerable Ajaan Mun turned to the Bhikkhus and said:

"Now this girl is dead, let us give her the rites *(Mātika)*."

But it was only Venerable Ajaan Mun who repeated the words of the *Mātika* in the midst of the Bhikkhus of the Sangha who were standing and watching. He said:

"'Anicca vata sankhārā...' When the sankhāras which make up the body have died, the body is no longer of any use. But the citta does not die and can go on doing work endlessly. If the heart is used for going into evil ways, it becomes dangerous and harmful to oneself."

He repeated this three times in succession, after which she saw him gently tapping the body with a stick, while saying:

"The body is not steadfast, having been born it is bound to die. But the citta, the heart, is steadfast. It has no birth, or death when the body dies. It only whirls around in accordance with the causes and conditions which make it go round like this."

He kept on repeating this, over and over, but whenever he tapped the body with his stick, the skin, flesh and meat rotted and withered away, until the whole body had rotted away. For he kept on tapping it until he had covered the whole body. All that was left was the "kernel" of the heart. This he picked up from the remains and said:

"This, the heart, cannot be destroyed. If it were destroyed one would be bound to die without ever coming back again."

She had been watching all this closely, from when it first appeared to her. Then she thought:

> "If one dies and the whole body decomposes, leaving only bones behind, what is there left to come back again?"

He answered her thought immediately without looking at her, saying:

> "It's bound to come back again! How could it not come back when that which brings it back again is still there. When it starts to get light at dawn tomorrow you will come back."

She said that from the start of it in the evening when there was all the activity concerning the dead body, until it finished and Venerable Ajaan went off with the Bhikkhus, took a very long time. She related the story to me at length, but I cannot remember all of it. She said how the *citta* started to display these things from the moment it first dropped into a calm state and the experiences which she had went on continuously until just before dawn when it arose out of it. As soon as the *citta* withdrew and she became aware of herself and heard the cocks crowing in the early morning, she saw herself still sitting there as normal, and not dead as she still thought. Then she returned to a normal waking state, glad that she had not died as appeared to happen in her vision. But when she had become fully aware of herself and knew that she had truly not died, she started blaming herself in her mind, thinking:

> "Venerable Ajaan told me to sit and do *bhāvanā,* but why then did I fall asleep while sitting? And I went on sleeping until I started dreaming that I was dead and I didn't wake throughout the whole night. Really, my *bhāvanā* was so bad last night!"

That morning when Venerable Ajaan came on *piṇḍapāta,* he told her to come and see him when the Bhikkhus had finished eating food, and this was before she had said anything to him about what had happened. It was also significant that this was the first time that he had ever told her to go and see him and it was very strange how he must have known all about what happened to her the previous night.

When she went to Venerable Ajaan, he asked her immediately:

> "How was your *bhāvanā* last night?"

"It was really no use at all," she replied, "for after repeating "Buddho" for about fifteen minutes, the *citta* fell into a deep well and I slept and dreamt almost the whole night. When it had almost reached the time for the dawn to break, I woke and felt so disappointed, I still can't get over it. I'm afraid that you will tell me off that my *bhāvanā* is no use and that all I can do is sleep."

After hearing this, Venerable Ajaan laughed with joy and asked her straight away:

"How did you sleep? And what did you dream? Please tell me about it."

So she told him the story of what had happened, which I have related above. He roared with laughter and was delighted, saying:

"That was no sleep, no dream! It was the calm *citta,* the integrated *citta.* You must remember this! That which you called a dream was not a dream, but a *"nimitta"*[146] which arose out of *samādhi bhāvanā.* This is what they mean when they talk about doing *bhāvanā* and seeing all sorts of *"nimittas".* What they see is the kind of thing that you also have seen."

Venerable Ajaan explained a lot more to her until she understood well. Then he sent her home instructing her forcefully to keep on doing *bhāvanā.* He also said:

"If your *citta* has any further experiences, relax and see them and let them come as they will and there is no need to be afraid of anything. I don't want you to be afraid of whatever experiences come and go while doing *bhāvanā,* but you must be precisely aware of them all. While I am here no harm will come to you and you need not be afraid. But whenever any knowledge or vision comes to you in *bhāvanā,* you should come and tell me about it."

From then on she was satisfied with her *bhāvanā* and she had all sorts of experiences which kept on arising continually, until Venerable Ajaan was about to leave the district. Then he sent word for her to come and see him and he ordered her forcefully to stop doing *bhāvanā* for the time being. He said that when

146. See footnote 65 on page 154.

the right time came she would gradually develop on her own, but that once he had gone she must not go on doing *bhāvanā.* He must have thought about her case and seen that she had a *citta* with daring and venturesome tendencies, and if anything untoward happened when he was not there, there would be nobody to help her and lead her out of trouble and she may go the wrong way and be ruined. So he did not let her go on doing *bhāvanā* after he left.

Although she did not understand the reason for this instruction, she had faith in him and followed him and stopped doing *bhāvanā* from then on, even though she wanted to do it so much she felt her heart would break. But when she was about forty years old she left her home and family life and was ordained as a nun *(Upāsikā)* and went on with her training in *bhāvanā.* Her characteristic tendencies to know and see all sorts of things then arose again and she had frequent experiences from then on.

When I met her she told me about the things that had happened in her *bhāvanā*. I also saw what her temperament was like, which explained why Venerable Ajaan had told her not to go on with *bhāvanā* — because of her daring and venturesome temperament. If there was nobody available who knew more and was more capable than herself, and who could control her when she got out of hand she could have gone the wrong way and would have been ruined, because she did not know the way to control herself. So now I shall summarise her story, only taking into consideration those things which are significant in connection with the problem of *samādhi* and *paññā* and which are suited to our purpose.

The things which she had come to know in strange and unusual ways were quite extensive. When Venerable Ajaan Mun was very sick and close to the time he died, she knew about it in her *samādhi,* even though they were in separate provinces and long way from each other. At night when she entered *samādhi,* she would have a vision of Venerable Ajaan Mun flying through the sky and hovering above her. Then she would seem to hear him say:

> "Father is very sick. You must hurry to visit Father — don't wait about and waste time. Father will leave this world this time for sure because of this illness."

The way in which Venerable Ajaan flew through the sky was something which she knew through her *samādhi bhāvanā.* Almost every night he came to warn her to hurry, for in a short while the chance of seeing the body of Venerable

Ajaan would be gone and he would die before she got there. As his end came closer, he would come more frequently, until she saw him coming every night without fail. It had been her normal practice since she was ordained to go once a year to pay respect to him and to hear his training and teaching. But when she started to see him coming to her quite frequently, she never managed to go and pay respect to him. Whether this was due to *kamma* or whatever else is difficult to say, but every time she saw him as a *samādhi nimitta* she would tell the other nuns about it, saying:

> "Venerable Ajaan is very sick and he has almost reached the end. He comes flying to tell me almost every night out of his great *mettā*."

Then later on he came every night.

> "We haven't yet gone to visit and pay respect to him. We have still got all these things that have to be done and it is hard to see the end of them."

When they decided to go and see him and pay their respects to him on any particular day something would obstruct it and the last day that they decided to go was the day that Venerable Ajaan died, so they never saw him. Late at night on the previous night when everything was calm and quiet he flew out of the sky and stood in mid-air and in a loud voice saying:

> "You see! Father has told you many times to hurry up and visit him. Now it is too late. If you let yourself lie down in satisfaction with this mass of excrement here and if you are not interested in listening to the words of your Father, there is no hope as is the case today. You won't see the body of Father any more for I have already left the world completely. Have you heard the news? If not you will hear it shortly. I told you the truth but you didn't believe it. Now all you will see there is a corpse which has nothing left with which to acknowledge you, for I have already left the world. Do you believe this? Or do you still not believe it? For it is just that *kamma* which arises from negligence which leads the world into despair. Tonight, Father has left this world and is gone for good."

After which he disappeared into the sky.

When her *citta* had come out of *samādhi* it was almost dawn. She could hardly stand it and burst into tears there by herself. For she had seen Venerable

Ajaan's *mettā* for her every night since he had come close to the time when he would leave the world and the *khandhas.* Once the dawn had come she quickly went to tell the others, saying:

> "Venerable Ajaan Mun has died and gone to *Nibbāna* last night. I know, for I had a very clear and certain *nimitta* in *bhāvanā* like those I have had before, coming to warn and rouse me up."

Then she burst into tears in front of all the other nuns quite unashamedly while they were confused and rather bewildered. It would not have been right for them to question her sanity because her ability to know things by way of *samādhi* was precise and accurate, and all of them had complete faith in it so that they could hardly doubt her sanity. While they were talking together about it, someone came running in excitedly, saying:

> "Venerable Ajaan Mun died last night — have you heard about it Mother? The provincial radio station broadcast this morning at 8 o'clock saying: 'Bhūridatta Thera who is the most widely renowned amongst those who practise the way of Dhamma in this present age, died at 2:23 am in Wat Suddhāvāsa in the province of Sakon Nakhon.' This is all I heard before I ran out to let people know, and I ran straight here to let Khun Mair (Mother) and the others here know, for I was afraid you may not have heard it yet."

Having had a second confirmation of Venerable Ajaan's death, all of them in the nunnery burst into tears once again after the first time earlier on when Khun Mair Kaew told them of her *nimitta.*

Khun Mair had knowledge of all sorts of strange things in her *samādhi,* things which were most unusual in all aspects, and it seems that she had been engrossed in and attached to this kind of knowledge for more than ten years. If on any day she did her *bhāvanā* and had no experience of various things by way of *samādhi nimittas,* she would consider that she had gained no value from her *bhāvanā* at all that day. She had become attached to this way of practice until it was deeply ingrained in her heart that seeing all sorts of *nimittas* was the true path and fruit of *bhāvanā.*

Later on, a Bhikkhu who was a follower of Venerable Ajaan Mun went to stay there for the *vassa* season, and he trained and taught her both about *nimittas* and about other things as well. Until she became confident and knew how to deal with *samādhi nimittas* and how to go in another direction — which is the direction of the Path and Fruition *(Magga–Phala)* — until her way became smooth and elegant the whole time without going to excess in some directions as had previously been the case. She was therefore ready to accept the "cure" and to change her ways and she saw the results of it to her own satisfaction, no longer being either elated or depressed in accordance with whatever *nimitta* arose. For she stood firm with *sati* and *paññā* as the way to go forward towards freedom from danger and the destruction of *dukkha.* In this way she continued to go on with ease and convenience in her practice, right up to the present day, and her reactions to her *samādhi nimittas* ceased to be a problem to her from then on. In fact this kind of *samādhi* has become an important factor in bringing value to herself and others round about. She has had knowledge of many strange things which most people who practise the way never come across. Knowledge of happenings in the past and future, knowledge of *Pretas, Bhūta*s (ghosts), *Devatās,* and knowledge of various kinds of beings in "heavenly" bodies — all of these she knew about well. But in order to give an idea of what is meant by the eye in the "*Deva* heart" of someone who practises the way and who has strong tendencies of character in this direction, I will give some brief examples.

One night, Khun Mair was sitting in *bhāvanā* and there appeared before her an animal which had come in the guise of a man, to visit her. It was wailing and bemoaning its fate, saying how it had been an animal which they looked after in this village, but it had never been treated well and kindly by its master. He had put it to work at pulling his plough and wagons very often, but instead of appreciating what it did he used to torment it and beat it while it was working and at other times as well. Finally it was led to a tree where it was tied up and slaughtered and cut up for its meat which was a fierce, cruel and inhuman act. Before it died it had to put up with unbearable torment and pain, and it died, not wanting to die.

When it came to the Nun it seemed to be full of hate and vengeance for its previous owner and so strong was it that it could not find any resting place for its *citta.* It had wandered about all twisted up and distorted until it came to Khun Mair for help in alleviating its *dukkha,* and to ask for some share in

her merit and virtue *(pāramī)* so that it may be born as a human being next time. So that it may breathe freely and shed some of its *dukkha* and not have to be forced and compelled to accept such punishment as it has just recently had to put up with. It said how being born as an animal was very hard with too much torment, for it had to put up with being made to do various things and being tortured in various ways both by people and animals as well. Being born as a human being is far better than being born as an animal, even when one is poor and hard up and can only get enough to eat about every third day, for an animal gets only *dukkha,* difficulty and torment all the time.

Khun Mair then questioned the "man", saying:

> "Why do you say that your master did not appreciate your value and virtue, and that he has no humanity in his heart, that he was so cruel to you in various ways and killed you, until now you are full of hate and vengeance against him? Could it be that you were not so good, and that you used to go about stealing things which people had planted in their fields and near the fences of their plantations, and eating them? Why normally, should anyone take you and beat you and torment you and then go and kill you? People round about here mostly seem to be good people with a fair humanity in them and one can feel reasonably confident of their behaviour. Why then should they do such a thing to you if you were blameless? It seems to me that you must have gone about doing bad things, such as I have said, for them to have acted like that and to have felt justified in doing what they did to you. Did you not act in some of those ways as I said?"

He replied with a sorrowful heart:

> "It was because I was so hungry and starving, just due to my mouth and stomach which are so important to animals of this world. If I saw anything that looked like food and sustenance, as soon as it reached my mouth I would grab it or nibble away at it in the way that animals do. I had no knowledge of what belonged to who or whether anyone was anxiously looking after anything. If I had known some of the language which people spoke I probably would not have done this, nor would I have been born as an animal for them to beat and slaughter, as happened just a short while ago. But then people are more intelligent than animals and they should be more considerate and forgiving and not act in ways that are too repressive — which are contrary

to the moral status *(Sīla–Dhamma)* and behaviour of a human being. A good person would not act in this way which is despicable and vulgar and undermines the status of his own birth. Such a person is a good person with moral integrity who is not likely to bring himself to do an act such as this. What Venerable Mother said about people round here being good and with fair humanity in them is true. But as for the person named..., who was my master, he is not a good person with humane qualities in his heart and not worthy of the human race. He is just the scum of the earth who happens to have been born as a person and he has a fierce and cruel heart and he will act like that with everything and I cannot forgive him. For even with other people, he is quite capable of doing harm to them, not to mention animals who are in a much more unfortunate situation."

Khun Mair then gave it some teaching with *mettā* and sympathy and she shared her merit with this animal, with a heart full of kindness and compassion while giving it the moral precepts and her blessing, saying:

"May the virtue and the result of the *mettā* which I share with you guard you, nourish you, promote you and lead you to the path which gives those qualities to gain birth in a state of happiness where you may have the food of the gods and golden mansions to live in and enjoy."

As soon as it had received her boon by saying, *"Sādhu",* it took leave of the Nun in a spirit of brightness, joy and happiness, as though it was off to be born in that state and place which it wished for right away.

After day break Khun Mair called her nephew from his home and quietly told him what happened the previous night. She then asked him to go and find out about this man, Mr... and what had happened. (Mr... refers to the man who, the strange animal in her meditation had said, was the one who killed him.) Then she said:

"But you must not let anyone know that I have asked you to find out about this. I'm afraid he would be ashamed in the face of what I know, or he may entertain bad thoughts about us which will increase his evil *kamma* far beyond what it is now."

After she had finished, her nephew immediately replied to her, for he lived in the same village as that man, and he knew all about it, saying:

> "Venerable Mother, there is no need for me to spend a lot of time finding out about this, for last night about 8:00 pm he led his buffalo out to... and killed it. The cries of the buffalo in its *dukkha* and torment could he heard everywhere. After he had finished he took its meat and had a party with his friends, feasting on it and making a lot of noise, yelling, shouting, laughing and carousing until it had almost reached dawn. I doubt whether they have even woken up yet in that household — but all this I know for a fact, so there is no need to waste time making any investigations."

This incident was one which Khun Mair told me about and it is notable in that the appearance of the *nimitta* took place the same night as the incident, although it appeared late at night when all was quiet which was a little time after the incident itself. This whole incident is one which we who are yet within the realm of *vaṭṭa (saṁsāra)* should think about, for it is something that could happen to any of us, regardless of time, place or personal status.

The next story concerns an incident with a forest pig — a wild boar. This story is strange and unusual in a special way — but we must start at the beginning.

This wild boar was wandering in search of food around the edge of the mountain on its own without thinking that there would be anybody lying in wait for it, because that district was very far away from any villages. It is probable that the hunter was waiting there to shoot any forest animals that came to drink water from a rock pond at the foot of this hill, and that it was also the *kamma* of this wild boar to go there. The wild boar would have laid down to wait for a while before going down to drink in this pond, then as soon as it had reached the water it was shot and killed.

In the early hours of the morning, shortly before dawn, the wild boar came to Khun Mair who was sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā*. It came in the form of a man — as did the buffalo in the previous incident. Khun Mair asked:

> "What is the reason, or what trouble are you in that you have come to see me?"

The man told her the story of why he had come, saying:

"I was killed by a hunter named..., when I went to drink some water, for I was thirsty."

Khun Mair then asked:

"When you went to take a drink, were you not cautious and wary of the danger to you?"

"Yes," he replied:

"I have always been cautious and have never let my guard drop for fear of danger. Life as an animal such as I was, is very difficult and one has no freedom in oneself. Wherever one goes there is nothing but danger and predators all round one and I always had to be very watchful, but even so I was shot and killed. However, the fact of my death does not concern me so much as being born again. I am afraid of being born as an animal once again, which is a life full of *dukkha* and torment. Because one must suffer hunger and privation, and also be constantly on guard against danger — all of which causes much *dukkha.* So one's life becomes a life of mistrust and watchfulness everywhere, with no place to eat, sleep and live peacefully relaxed. The reason why I have made the effort to come here is because of the fear of being born again in the wrong circumstances without being able to avoid it. I don't have the merit to help raise me up and support me. Therefore I made a great effort to come here in the hope of taking refuge in the merit and perfections of Venerable Mother who has practised the way of Dhamma and has such merit as supports the world. I beg you to be kind and benevolent and to bestow your blessings on this poor creature lacking in meritorious characteristics. Then I may be able to take birth in the state which I hope for. I have no wealth of virtue in me which could give me any confidence and assurance of my future state. All I have is the flesh and skin of my body which was killed tonight to offer as a gift of Dhamma reverence to you, who uphold Dhamma and live the holy life. So I came to pay respect to you, to tell you my reason for coming and also to implore you to help me. For when the people bring the parts of my body, both the valuable internal organs and the meat and skin and external parts, to give to you, I implore you Venerable Mother to partake and eat some of it with *mettā* for me. Then the merit which comes from this gift may act to help and support

me so that I may be born as a human being in my next life which is what I most desire. What I would really like to offer you are the internal organs of the wild boar which died and which was myself. But people are more greedy than animals and I fear that the best parts they will rather keep for themselves than use to make merit. That they will not bring them to you, afraid that they won't experience the flavour of them and being driven to do this by their own *kilesa* of greed. So I am very afraid and anxious that this, my final gift to you may not be as I would wish it to be."

Khun Mair then kindly taught him, gave him the five precepts *(sīla),* gave him her blessing, shared out some of her merit with him with the hope that he may be born in accordance with his aspiration. After receiving the thanksgiving *(anumodanā)* for his act of merit he took leave of her and went his way.

After daybreak Khun Mair quietly told the others, saying:

"I was sitting in *samādhi bhāvanā* late at night when, at about 3 o'clock a *nimitta* arose of a man who came to me in a manner that spoke of much *dukkha* and torment in his heart. When asked about his visit he said that he had been a wild boar living in the … hills for many years. But tonight when he went to take a drink of water in a rocky pool on the side of the hill he was shot and killed by Mr... who lives in … village and who was sitting close by. From having been in the form of the wild boar which he had died he came to me as a *nimitta* having taken the form of a man. He said he had come because he wanted to offer his body and its parts which had been killed as *dāna* to us, so that we should take his flesh and skin and eat it as food. As a result of doing this he hoped that he would be born as a human being in his next life. I have told you the main facts of this incident so that you shall know about it beforehand, so that when the people bring flesh and meat and whatever else to give to us, we should accept it and be kind enough to eat it as well, so that the merit from it may help him to be born as a human being in his next life. I don't know why this took place. I have never come across anything like this before, that an animal has wanted to make merit by giving its own meat like this wild boar has done. That is, if it is true, so we must wait and see whether it is true or not and we should know very soon."

If we think of the order in which these events occurred, it was really quite amazing and remarkable how, before long, at about 8 o'clock in the morning, two or three woman came with the wife of Mr... whom the wild boar had named as the hunter who killed him. One of them brought some pig meat to give to the Nuns, and when they saw it they thought that this must surely be the meat of that wild boar. When they asked these people about this meat and where it came from, the whole story was in accordance with what Khun Mair had told them right through, even to the name of the hunter who had shot him. These are the kinds of *nimittas* that arise in some people who practise *samādhi,* and the problems that arise from *samādhi* are numerous, as we have already said. This is enough about *samādhi* so we will finish here.

The Problems That Arise With Wisdom

As for the problems which arise from the levels of wisdom *(paññā),* they are far more numerous than those of *samādhi* as well as being much more profound and intricate. They can arise any day, any time without forewarning and one must use wisdom to unravel them, to analyse them and to solve them one by one. Otherwise there is no way to clear them and to go beyond them — and if one is still unable to go beyond them, they will go on making one perplexed and stupefied, sometimes for days at a time. Since each problem differs in its nature and difficulty, those who practise the way must be people who are naturally inclined to contemplation and analysis within themselves, without needing anyone to coerce or compel them. Each problem that arises acts as if it were a stimulus to stir up mindfulness and wisdom, waking oneself up. The path of mindfulness and wisdom may be considered to extend from the level of the contemplation of loathsomeness *(asubha),* up to the levels of the contemplation of the factors of mind *(nāma–dhamma)* — which are the more subtle levels. At this point, the one who practises the way is bound to be rousing up problems and questions, as well as wisdom, far more than at any stage he has passed through. But if he believes that he has a basic ground of his *citta* and Dhamma which are already subtle and skilful in the Dhamma of loathsomeness as well as the *Nāma–dhamma* — which are: feeling *(vedanā),* memory *(saññā),* thought processes *(sankhāra)* and consciousness *(viññāṇa)* — yet no problems arise to trouble the heart at all, and he prides himself that he is

in the group of those who go the way of *"Sukhāpaṭipadā"* — easy practice, he will in fact be the group of those who are complacent and negligent in doing the practices for extracting the tap root and all the smaller roots, or, all the roots and fundamental source of all the *kilesas,* without realising it. For the process of curing the *kilesas* by means of the practice, from the beginning of *samādhi* up to the various levels of *paññā,* going up step by step will normally be accompanied by many problems and questions which percolate into the practice all the way along. But they also arouse and stir up mindfulness and wisdom, thereby making us wake up.

One who practises Dhamma and who never has any problems or questions arising at all is sure to be practising in a way that is too easy and relaxed. As if those questions were bits of meat of the type which the chopping block is afraid to take on, and it is not courageous enough to bring them out to be chopped up. One fears that this is just his negligence and complacency — or delusion *(moha)* that makes him afraid, so that he doesn't have the courage to bring these questions to be accounted for. He is afraid that it will destroy all the minions of *moha* who are so numerous, breaking their enclosure and dispersing them all into oblivion.

In particular, the levels of wisdom, for those who have reached them, are bound to be a warehouse full of questions from all sorts of viewpoints which should arise continually, all the time. When these questions or problems arise, mindfulness and wisdom cannot remain quiet and inactive, because they are stirred up by the incessant nagging of the problems until they cannot put up with it anymore and must go to work to examine, to investigate and to solve them and get rid of them one by one. This means that every time one solves any problem, one also takes a step forward and goes beyond that problem. Each time that a problem is solved all sorts of skills and methods will come to one. They arise continually from mindfulness and wisdom which have been put to work to dig up, to search and to unravel them.

The way of practice which has no problems and questions arising at all is indicative of complacency in the one who is doing the practice and it shows that he is not looking for the way to get free with the concern for it that he should have. This is because — generally speaking — problems and questions arise from contemplation and thought searching for causes. The *citta* is the one that always receives the results of good and bad causes, and when one looks into them and thinks about them one is almost bound to come across things

which bring up questions and problems. For someone who is interested in developing wisdom, the means of cutting off the *kilesas,* these problems are the means of arousing wisdom when he reaches that point in the future.

Therefore my own view of this, of which I feel quite convinced, is that anyone who practises the way of Dhamma and who has no problems or questions arising from his practice at all, from the levels of *samādhi* onwards, is not practising for the purpose of gaining true wisdom and clear understanding in the Noble Truths *(Sacca–Dhamma)* and he will not be able to find the way to freedom. This is because the Noble Truth which binds down the *citta* and which has "uprising" *(samudaya)* as its most important characteristic is the source of all the problems and confusions which arouse or disturb us. On the other hand, the "Path" *(Magga)* has 'Right View' *(Sammā–Diṭṭhi)* and 'Right Attitude of Mind' *(Sammā–Saṅkappa)* as its most important characteristics, for these are the source of wisdom *(paññā)* at all levels. And this is what solves the questions which arise from *Samudaya Sacca.*

Both of these Dhamma principles are bound to perform their respective functions to their utmost at their present level, before they can go on further beyond the present level or basis of each one respectively. The work that mindfulness and wisdom *(sati–paññā)* does in connection with *samudaya* (uprising) — the root cause of all these problems — is what is meant by the "arousing of problems and questions". It is also what is meant by the "curing of problems" — as it is called amongst those who practise the way of *bhāvanā.*

Therefore, those who have already gone some way towards the attainment of calm *(samādhi)* should steadily begin to use wisdom to search out the ways of cause and effect from this stage on. Or one may say that they should begin to search and research into the why and wherefore of things so as to give rise to questions, so that their wisdom shall have some work to do and not be out of work and idle — which is the way of a lazy person who is used to being contented and complacent. This is the meaning of *moha* — the delusion which lulls them into a waking sleep the whole time out of which, from day to day, they never wake at all. This is not the path of *samādhi* and *paññā,* not the way to gain that freedom which is gained by those who follow the principles of curing the *kilesas* by means of *sati* and *paññā.*

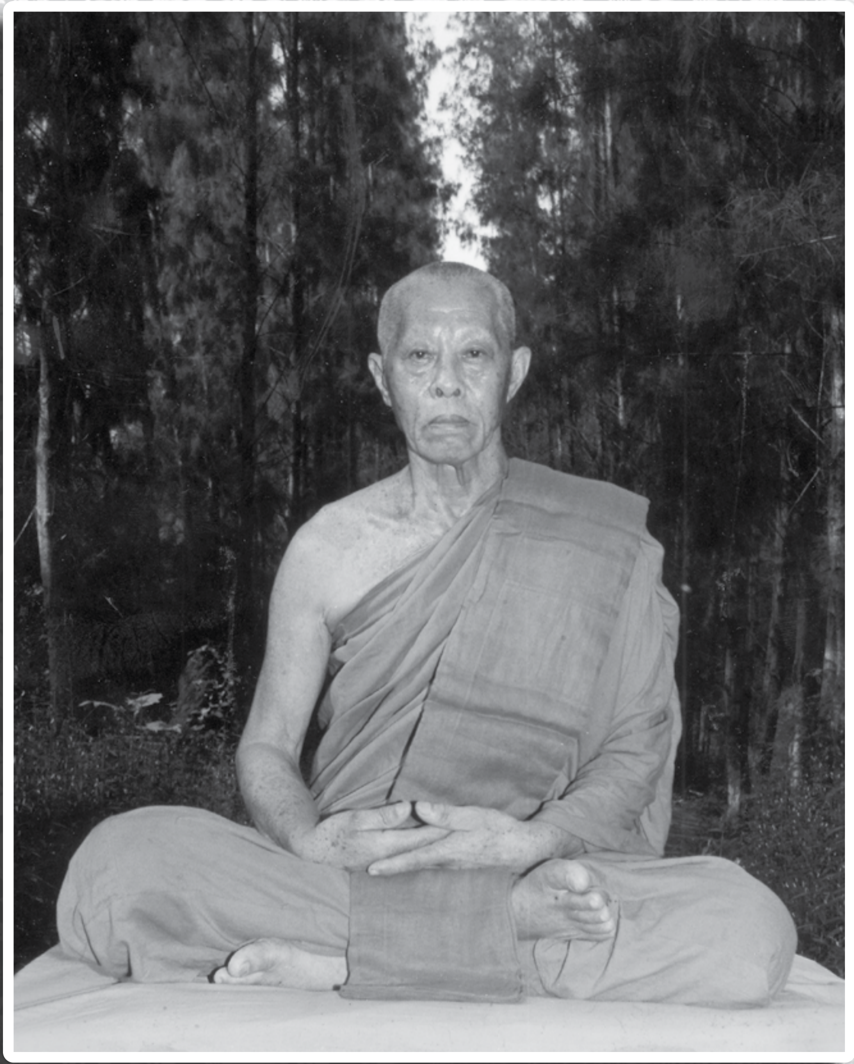
But it is not possible to give details of what perplexities and problems should arise, what kind of characteristics they should have, or what kind of wisdom should be used to cure what kind of problem and by the use of

what method. All such things must depend on the technique or skill of each individual, who must think out and make up his own methods to suit the circumstances and situation which he is faced with each time and in each case. Because, in regard to such problems and perplexing things as well as the wisdom itself, there are innumerable different kinds and they hop and change about in accordance with the deceptive tricks of the uprising *(samudaya) kilesas* and the skilfulness of *sati* and *paññā.* Therefore, I have only put down what is essential without making it too involved and long winded, which might discourage the reader before he has started to do any of it in practice.

However, in the way of practice in the heart which is aimed at getting at the truth of causes and their results, there is bound to be perplexity as well as wisdom, and these two are always enemies to each other and they remain so until the ultimate resolution of causes and their results has been fully attained. In consequence, all problems and perplexities then die away and disappear whether they are about the "uprising" *(samudaya)* or about the "Path" *(Magga)* which is the one that cures it.

All of you who practise the way should therefore be resolute and constant in maintaining mindfulness and wisdom. For they are the factors which will show up the reasons behind the various aspects of the problems which arise and come to you in the way of *samādhi* and the way of contemplative thought or wisdom. This will enable you to reveal the full meaning of these problems with all the reasons for them, and this is the way to progress in Dhamma. The *kilesas* with which each of those problems are permeated will also drop away and dissolve as soon as each problem is solved and dispersed.

I feel that this is enough explanation about the problems and questions, that should arise from the way of *samādhi* and *paññā,* to act as a guide to those who are interested. So I shall end here.



Venerable Ajaan Jia

18

More on Behaviour & Dhamma Discussions

The Dhamma conversations which occur amongst *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* are bound to bring up various problems arising from both *samādhi* and *paññā* of a kind that involves both inseparably. This is why I have brought in some of the stories which should be thought about as examples of some of the things which some people have come across and experienced from their practice, such as the things that happened to the Nun Khun Mair Kaew. I have only brought in those stories which are isolated cases, and not those which are long and involved such as occurs amongst those who themselves do the practice. For each case is individual and dependent on the inherent characteristics of each person concerned, and they differ considerably. So I have always found these Dhamma conversations to be very varied and involved, in accordance with the basic level of those concerned, who do the practice and have experienced various aspects of it, each in their own way.

What is the nature of the problems which are associated with *samādhi* that has "integrated"[147] down, and which arise at that time? Having "integrated down", it stops at one of the levels of *samādhi* such as *khaṇika* (momentary), *upacāra* (close by) or *appaṇā* (full attainment). When it integrates, goes down and stops at the level of *upacāra*, the *citta* goes out, contacts and acknowledges[148] various things, and this is the type of *samādhi* which tends to bring up more

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147. "Integrated down" (Ruam-Long): 'Ruam' means to gather together or to integrate; 'Long' means "down". This is a well known expression used by *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* which describes the experience of going into *samādhi*.

148. Acknowledges (rup-rū): Literally means "to receive or know". Whenever the *citta* is contacted by anything entering through any of the five external sense doors, or through the mind door, it can acknowledge that sensation unless there is something else stopping it. As for example if the sensation arises while attending to another sensation, it will not receive both at the same time. It should however be realised that a full understanding of this is both profound and difficult.

problems than any other type. Some of these problems are the source of questions which those who practise may have come across in some cases, which they then bring up in conversation with their companions, or with a teacher whom they respect and have faith in, because they need the answer to them. Those others who also have similar problems, or problems associated with various different levels of *paññā,* then bring them out for discussion, so as to check their own knowledge and understanding to make sure that it is right on both sides. In other words, on the side of the one who has come to learn and ask questions to make sure there is no danger of his being at fault in all the problems and questions which have been discussed. Secondly, on the side of the one who gives the teaching, he can feel confident that the questions that the others ask him are leading in the direction and are for the purpose of getting rid of the *kilesas;* and also, that they are instrumental in promoting investigation into all sorts of things that happen, wherever it is necessary.

Problems concerning the overcoming of obstacles obstructing investigative thoughts which are for the purpose of progressing past difficulties step by step, are very important. When someone does such an investigation: what is the *citta* attached to? And, how should he investigate to penetrate the problem and go beyond it? The one he talks to or the *Ācariya* must try to point out and make clear a method for curing such a problem, until he has understood it sufficiently well so that he can use that method to practise in the right way and steadily get results from it.

Any of the problems which arise at the various levels of *samādhi* and *paññā* are liable to cause a lot of worry and concern to the one who has them, which can be quite noticeable. Not only must he try to work out his problems for himself, but he must also depend on those Venerable Ones who have already gone this way, to consult with from time to time, so that he may be quite sure that the practice and problems which he has worked out for himself and consulted others upon, are firmly embedded in his heart with all the reasons for them. For this reason, *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* are likely to get together for talks on Dhamma very frequently, due to the fact that their practice is going on all the time.

When Bhikkhus talk about things which are personal and vital, things which touch upon the true nature of Dhamma and its meanings, they generally do so just two together. This kind of conversation is bound to be a special occasion and rarely occurs. For when they meet each other, each of them longs

to hear about the fruits of the practice of Dhamma which the other has in his heart. Their conversation will then probably start at the beginning of their practice, or from where they left off in their last conversation together. In the first case one of them tells his own story from the beginning, right through to the present state of his *citta.* Afterwards, if it is not yet suitable for the listener to ask and hammer out the problems which he has in mind, he will start out to relate his own story to the other person, from the beginning, until he has covered everything which he knows and which has happened up to the present. After that, if either of them has doubts about any aspect of Dhamma, or about uncertainties which are hidden in the Dhamma which the other has related, they will bring them up and test their understanding further to make sure of it, until they both accept it and are in full agreement with each other.

Furthermore, if the answer to any of the problems which were brought up for discussion were found to be not entirely satisfactory to the one who was most advanced in his practice, he would give an authoritative explanation. If it is necessary to correct and alter the way that the other party is going, he will also explain how he should go about correcting his practice. If he should stop and not go on doing whatever it is that is wrong any more because it will bring him harm, the one who is explaining will point it out to him and give the reasons why, until he understands.

Therefore, I feel that Dhamma conversations which are concerned with the practice are a great boon and blessing to both of those involved. Because each will listen to the other with close attention from beginning to end while he is talking, and each gains by following Dhamma *(Dhammānusaraṇa)* from each other, which acts as something to be thought about and practised and something to gain more value from than one can say. Both of them are bound to remember each other with a great and unfolding sense of gratitude for the rest of their lives — it could not be otherwise.

While they are discussing Dhamma together, sometimes there may be a bold and intrepid Bhikkhu, such as the present writer, who creeps up secretly to listen to what they say although he has no business to do so. To say that this is contrary to the *Vinaya* rule which makes it an offence for a Bhikkhu to creep up secretly and listen to Bhikkhus who are quarrelling together contentiously does not apply to the kind of discussion we are considering here. It therefore leaves room for Bhikkhus, of the kind who have no business to do so, to have a short cut to find and learn Dhamma in this way. Such a time is a golden

opportunity to hear Dhamma which is pure gold for both of those who take part in the discussion as well as for anyone who creeps up secretly to listen; an opportunity which they would never get elsewhere. For this is the time when both parties open up and bring out the Dhamma from their hearts to reveal that which is their highest achievement to each other's ears and hearts. Those who creep up and listen to them also enjoy stealing the Dhamma that overflows from them, so that it can become their own highest achievement in the future. It seems that there have been very few sages of the kind who "steal" Dhamma in the history of Buddhism. But there must have been some in all ages from the time of the Buddha up to the present day, and especially amongst those who practise the way. Because what they hear is something which is very difficult and rare to come across in the usual Buddhist meetings that take place in many places. This type of Dhamma is truly not for such meetings — and not the kind which should be brought out in public. For it is the "personal Dhamma" which dwells just within each individual and which can only be brought out when the right occasion for a discussion, at the right place and time and with the right people who inspire confidence, arises.

A Dhamma conversation between those whose *cittas* and Dhamma are at a high level can take several hours before each one finishes talking. Because it involves their methods of practice, their places for doing the practice and the overcoming and curing each one of their important problems, of which each of them has had many. And the Dhamma which they understand at each level after they have managed to cure each important problem is a long story and so involved and profound as to be beyond a full explanation of what happened to the *citta,* even though it is so important. It takes a long time for each of them has to put all the essential facts of what happened to him into his explanation, which makes it both lengthy and involved. This is necessary, because it is essential for them to relate all the crucial points in full so that the other party may understand and assess whether the reasons given are sufficient and valid or contradictory in any way. This in turn comes from the fact that the results of Dhamma at every level that arises from the practice which is done, must display its causes; in other words, the way in which one acts determines the way one goes. Therefore, a Dhamma discussion must include the causes as an inseparable pair with the results. Whichever of them knows and whichever tells his story, they are bound to bring in the causes, which are the ways of behaviour and practice as confirmation, and the results which arose must display a conformity with those causes.

That which is most valuable to listen to and which goes to one's heart, never to be forgotten, is the story of the time when the *citta* of the speaker turned itself around by the skilful means of *sati–paññā,* which was fully equal to the deceptive tricks of every kind of *kilesa,* and steadily progressed beyond them with that level of *sati–paññā* which is up to all the tricks and devious ways of sexual craving *(rāga–taṇhā).* Then this kind of *citta* which is imbued with *kilesas* of this kind is cut off and can no longer continue to arise from then on. Then finally, the *citta* which has reached this level, full of strength and fully developed, overturns *avijjā,* which has been the "tap root" of the round *(vaṭṭa)* of *saṁsāra,* and disposes of it. These, which are the most special and wonderful Dhammas, are rarely heard by anyone throughout their life. For what generally happens both with ourselves and others, is that we die empty handed, without ever having heard the sound of the Venerable Ones who have done the practice and known this kind of Dhamma entering our ears. All we hear is the sounds of empty talk and vanity which weigh us down, destroying our health and well being both physical and mental; sounds such as we and you hear all the time nowadays until we are sick and tired of them. But even then we cannot refrain from speaking and hearing them because they are like food left over at the bottom of the pot — if we don't eat it, what will we eat?

But in Dhamma talks between these Bhikkhus which we have been discussing above, they talk in ways that come naturally to them in what is associated with the *citta* in the sphere of practice. They do not talk about having reached this stage or that level of Dhamma. In fact when they talk together, none of them ever claims that he has reached this or that stage, such as the attainment of Stream-entry *(Sotāpanna)* up to *Arahatta.* All of them seem naturally to follow the ways of the forest rather than the ways of those who have advanced in society and become clever in its conventions.

Amongst those who practise the way, if they hear any one of them speaking like people in the world who have developed materially, saying that they have attained this or that level, what should their companions think? They are bound to feel uncomfortable and out of harmony with such a Bhikkhu, who acts in such strange and peculiar ways. Because of this kind of behaviour, they would immediately start to lose confidence in him. For none of them would act like that even though they are also aspiring for Dhammas at those

levels with a full-hearted commitment and may in fact be able to talk about them. They are like this because they see that they are the highest Dhamma within the field of Dhamma as they conceptualise it. Therefore they uphold it as the highest and would not demean it by putting it into words and speech. But their aim is to make contact with it in the heart by means of the various aspects of practice, rather than displaying such offensive behaviour for the world to see.

There are however, those who speak out in the belief that they have attained some higher state, which comes from a lack of circumspection, but their intention is still good. Although there are also those who speak out, saying that they know the way to go wandering about on the moon or Mars and other such things. This comes from motives that are coarse and evil and lacking in any virtue and such people should not be within the circle of those who practise the way. The former kind may be forgiven and they should be helped in any way that is possible, in fact the effort should be made to give them the greatest assistance that is available. The other Bhikkhus do not look on this type with distaste or loathing, but rather with compassion and they give their advice with *mettā*. Because it is quite possible for this kind of thing to happen amongst those who practise the way. For when they have never gone this way before they are liable to gain knowledge as well as delusion, which happens with all of us. This sort of thing happened here quite recently and the story of it was told by a Bhikkhu who practises well and has very strong commitment to Dhamma. He said that he went to practise Dhamma in the hills and late one night when everything was quiet and peaceful he became very calm and quiet at about midnight. He thought that he had attained the goal and become an *Arahant*. So he took out his "snuff pipe"[149] from his handbag and blew it as a whistle, "Piiit..." to call his companions who had gone to stay in the same location. They quickly came to him, concerned that something had happened and asked him why he had called them. He answered straightforwardly:

> "I've attained (Enlightenment). It happened just now and felt compassion for you, so I blew my whistle to call you."

Whether this was true or false they did not know at that time, but they thought to themselves: "This whistle blowing attainment, what kind of thing is this?

149. This is a "U" shaped metal tube in which snuff is put at one end. One end of the tube is then put in one's mouth and the other end in one nostril and the snuff is blown into the nostril. It is then usually repeated for the second nostril.

It's too bizarre and peculiar," although neither of them felt sure enough to say anything about it.

The following night at about midnight, they again heard the whistle, loud and echoing about the hills. They thought to themselves:

> "Blowing that whistle at this time, has he attained a state of madness — or what else now. Last night he attained the state of *Arahant,* so what else can he have attained this time? We don't know, but this *Arahant* is a real pest."

But they had to go and see because they had come as a group and it would have been wrong just to take no notice. When they got there they asked him: "What have you managed to attain this time?" The whistling *Arahant* then said:

> "In fact I did not attain anything. It was a mistake last night, for just now I realised that they are still there, so I quickly blew my whistle to call you, so as to correct what I said yesterday and to let you know that there has been no attainment yet. In fact I was completely deceived by them and these *kilesas* are very clever. From now on I am going to discipline them most severely. That I could be so deceived by these *kilesas* makes me really angry."

One of the others asked him saying:

> "What happened last night and tonight is one thing, but why then do you have to talk about it so much? Is it that you don't have any mindfulness in your heart, or what? I think that before long you will be a case of a *Kammaṭṭhāna* madness."

> "I feel so ashamed about it now. But the *kilesas* had vanished and were quite silent. I thought that they were dead and I had to celebrate my victory with you, so I blew my whistle, see! But tonight they reappeared once again and they are not dead as I had thought. So I had to call you once again to let you know."

When there is wrong understanding such as the foregoing, nobody takes it very seriously. It is amusing and something that they can get a good laugh out of. As for the latter type, they are loathsome and fearful. But those who want to go to the moon will, generally speaking, like this latter kind very much.

This is why there always tends to be some lunacy hidden within the circle of those who practise the way and there is no way to cure it completely.

In particular, Venerable Ajaan Mun was, as far as I know, never heard to speak of himself in connection with the Path and Fruition, saying that he had attained to such and such a stage or level — or even to imply this. I felt that he had great reverence for these stages and levels of Dhamma. Although he would talk and say things which accorded with the truth of Dhamma which arose within him, and even though it is written in the biography of Venerable Ajaan Mun that he had attained these states, he never made any such claims. It was just that the writer of the biography who is rather foolish, wrote about him from his own understanding that came from listening to the Dhamma in his nature. My purpose in writing in this way in the biography was to try and get the reader, or those who hear it being read out, to take it in, in a heart felt way. For even though readers have probably not reached that state, they can at least read about it or hear it as the heart's ideal and be inspired and encouraged by it, and aroused out of their incessant pit of complacency.

Speaking about the skilful methods of *sati–paññā* in their adaptability to the *kilesas* and the course taken by the *citta* in breaking through and cutting down all the *kilesas* by various methods, which were the characteristics of behaviour of the greatest Teachers, and as an example, we may look to Venerable Ajaan Mun, who is the owner of his own biography, in this present age. I cannot find any fault or flaw in him, but he was never heard to say such things as, "I have gone beyond this stage or that level of Dhamma..." Because the skill and perspicacity of those who establish the patterns of behaviour in this modern world do not display outwardly such things, as would be unseemly and would tarnish the good reputation of the Dhamma and *Vinaya,* the two things which represent the original Teacher *(Sāsadā).* This wise discrimination taught him to know the basic ground of the original Teacher and of himself, for he was a *Sāvaka* (one who listens and follows), and in the suppositions of the world *(sammuti),* the two are quite different. For a while he himself was still within *sammuti,* being still associated with the elements and groups *(dhātu–khandha)* which make up a person, even though his *citta* had already gone beyond and become free, it was necessary for him to maintain this way of behaviour as an example to other people in the future such as you and I, so that we may at least have a sense of shame in ourselves and in our hearts to prevent us from spreading such talk about in a way that has no good purpose. Until others

who practise Dhamma become disgusted and repelled by the offensiveness of it against the ways of their society which still respects those conventions which are decent and virtuous.

In truth, those who practise Dhamma, who have a high level of Dhamma in their hearts and who are worthy of faith and respect just display this fact in their external activities for others to be able to know well enough to what extent they conform to the standards of the world and Dhamma, and there is really no need to make an announcement of any unseemly and repugnant claims. The world has always used discernment to assess what is good and bad, for in the world of people who are Buddhists, those who lead the way in upholding the religion are not just made up of stupid people,[150] such that those who are truly wise and who have attained the Ariya lineage should blame them and make a broadcast of the religion. For those methods, which are truly good, harmonious and subtle, which are complete with all the techniques and Dhamma truths which they have always used to bring harmony and a joyous heart to their followers, have not yet been lost and have not yet vanished from the religion and those who practise the way. There are still those methods that perpetuate the "flowers and fruit" which are pleasing, a joy to see and make for peace of heart in those who have seen them and admired them in the past, and they still exist in this present age. A good example of this is the story of Venerable Assaji who was one of the first *Arahants* and who taught Dhamma to Venerable Sāriputta. He was a most humble and self-effacing follower *(Sāvaka)* of the Buddha, which was so right and proper for one who was known to have "conquered the outflows" *(Jīnāsava)* and in whose heart there remained no taint of worldly desires *(lokāmisa)* at all. The gist of what he taught Sāriputta at that time was as follows:

> "This monk has only recently been ordained into the Dhamma and *Vinaya* and he has not got any extensive experience or knowledge. So he cannot reveal Dhamma to you that is very profound and wide in scope, but will give you a brief summary of the central principle."

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150. In other words, there are many people, who for various reasons take an interest in Buddhism and then go about giving talks and teaching when they still do not understand the teaching. Some of them also make and sell amulets, deal in fortune telling and magic of various kinds. But there are also many good people who are aware of their own faults, who are watchful and guarded in their behaviour and truly practise the way. They also have great faith in the *Ācariyas*. They uphold the *Sāsana* in the right way, are worthy of praise and lead others to do likewise.

Then he taught, saying:

> *"All Dhammas arise from causes, and they cease because causes bring about their cessation.* The Venerable *Samaṇa* Gotama who is our prime Teacher *(Sāsadā)* revealed and taught us this."

That is all he said, and the wise and perceptive Sāriputta who was then a wandering religious mendicant *(Paribbājaka)* and was at the cross roads between his old faith and the way of the Buddha, knew the taste of Dhamma immediately, at that moment. He also grasped at the path of Buddhism which immediately went deeply into his heart. It was as though he were to make an exclamation, saying that he had found a completely reliable and trustworthy life-line to claim his attention, which came from the great virtue of Venerable Assaji Thera quite unexpectedly. All that was left of the original wandering mendicant after that, was his external appearance. As for the initiation as a *Samaṇa,* which he had received from Venerable Assaji Thera, it was the first level of Ariya *Sāvaka,* as accords with the way of nature. But even so, the *Paribbājaka* Upatissa[151] still did not know what the *Samaṇa* status was of the *Ācariya* who had caused the Ariya ground to arise in him. This was because Venerable Assaji had no interest in talking about himself — which would be just a lot of hot air coming from his mouth and would soon evaporate — unlike his talk of the truths of Dhamma which he gave to Upatissa, resulting in his gaining a satisfying refuge right then and there.

This is the Aryan custom of those who have come to the end of worldly ways and attachments *(lokāmisa),* which are poison acting like bait that is dangerous to all us fish. So the ways in which they act towards the world are always quite wonderful and remarkable. The tone and manner in which Venerable Assaji revealed Dhamma to the wanderer Upatissa comes resounding and clear to the inner sense of hearing of us Buddhists, and even though it occurred more than two thousand years ago, it has not faded or lost its meaning with the passing of time. In addition, even though Upatissa had gained a new vitality and life leading to his becoming Venerable Sāriputta the *Sāvaka* of the Buddha, he never became proud and puffed up in the way that people usually do. Even when he became the foremost of all the *Sāvaka* followers of the Lord, he always paid homage and the deepest reverence to the virtuous qualities of his Teacher. Moreover he was highly praised by the

151. Upatissa was Venerable Sāriputta's name before he became ordained as Sāriputta.

Lord, the Supreme Teacher *(Parama–Sāsadā)* who said of him that he knows and never forgets those who have helped him and been generous to him even in small ways. Like the case of the *Brāhmaṇa* Rādha who received ordination as a Bhikkhu because Venerable Sāriputta acknowledged that he remembered him once having given a ladle full of food in his bowl. If we compare this with the ways of ordinary people in the world, they would never have recalled such a small incident in the same circumstances. Because the position of being the foremost disciple, the Buddha's right hand man, which was a position, secondary only to the Lord Buddha himself would probably have made them forget or not bother about such a small, trifling matter. But Dhamma and the one who was the foremost disciple, who was a "gold mine" of Dhamma, are not like the world, nor do they tend to incline in that direction. For the more virtuous the more eminent he was, and anyone who does good acts to or for such a person, however small their actions may be, takes on some of this eminence — because their virtue induces this eminence.

Furthermore, because virtue and wealth, which is external, is different from virtue and wealth, that is internal, the behaviour and modes of expression of those who have either of those two forms of virtue and wealth are also characteristically different. Therefore, the experience and manner of display of wealth differ accordingly in their degree of grace, depth and subtlety. Like the way in which Venerable Assaji acted towards Sāriputta when he was still Upatissa the wanderer, which was most impressive and captivating. For they were the actions of one who had broken all attachments to material things *(āmisa)* which people in the world desire. So it was an external display which intimated to the world that: "He is complete and fulfilled in all ways" — that he is not deficient and wanting in anything any more, not even wanting praise and adulation. Because such things are just parasites hanging around, waiting their chance to get some food to build up their own bodies and to thrive by the destruction of those things which they depend on, causing them to collapse into ruins. He would therefore never let such things get in and live off him, unlike people in the world who allow themselves to act as vessels for holding them all the time and they can never get enough of them.

On the other hand, when Sāriputta, who was a "treasury" of the highest mindfulness and wisdom *(Mahā–Sati — Mahā–Paññā)* and also gratitude, talked about the virtue of the *Brāhmaṇa* who had given food to him, instead of showing up the one who did this good act, it tended far more to show up the

one who was outstanding in these Dhamma virtues. Because what he said was completely without any grasping and conceit, such as that of having reached the position of being the foremost *Sāvaka* who should not praise the virtues of others much, for fear that it would diminish his own status. Instead, he took that most cherished status as an object of contemplation, thinking:

> "All these wonderful things that arise within me do so because of the help and kindness of others."

So he spoke out about the generous treatment which he had received from the *Brāhmaṇa* as being great and important without any ambivalence — which would have been characteristic of those who think too much of themselves. This is why all the Dhamma virtues of all kinds which were within Venerable Sāriputta Buddha Sāvaka were outstanding in the sphere of Buddhism and still are right up to the present day.

The manner in which Venerable Assaji and Venerable Sāriputta behaved and practised has always been an inspiration to those who put their hope and trust in someone else — a Teacher — with the expectation that he will be a support to them all the time, while they still have to rely upon others. They will also uphold and venerate that Dhamma virtue which never deteriorates, changes or disappears to the end of time. So the Religion will thrive and the heart of that person who cherishes Dhamma and venerates this aspect of Dhamma will be calm and peaceful and he will see happiness in the present right here. Venerable Ajaan Mun very clearly displayed this type of behaviour, which can be seen in the way he always spoke about and upheld the virtue and value of Venerable Ajaan Sao. For he used to recall the time when he was first ordained and began to practise the way, and how he depended on him constantly. It was Venerable Ajaan Sao who trained him in everything connected with the manner of living, the forms of behaviour that are appropriate for a Bhikkhu and the meditation practice *(bhāvanā).* Whatever understanding he gained was dependent on Venerable Ajaan Sao as the one who first initiated him into the way to be a Bhikkhu and a *Kammaṭṭhāna* monk and taught him from then on. Afterwards he would talk about the virtue of the ordinary people who had faith and of those forest and hill folk who generously helped him when his practice was like a life and death struggle. While he was in the district of Chiang Mai, in each place that he stayed in he would always tend to praise the virtues of the people who had faith. This seemed to be an important

part of his character, otherwise it is probable that it would not have stood out so clearly and prominently to other people.

The foregoing section has been an explanation of the way that *Kammaṭṭhāna* Bhikkhus who have an essential understanding of Dhamma and various associated questions which accord with each one's level of attainment and character, come together to discuss them and talk Dhamma. This may be summarised as follows:

Doubts and problems which arise in one's heart may be overcome by:

1. Introspective contemplation and analysis on one's own.
2. Discussion with others, or privately with a Teacher, an *Ācariya*.
3. Listening to a Dhamma talk given by the *Ācariya*, in which he talks about that problem.

Dhamma discussions which take place between those who practise the way of *Kammaṭṭhāna* take place very quietly. Just like a meeting of mice. But not at all like a meeting of cats!

Those who practise the way look upon these discussions as being very important and on a par with the practice itself. Therefore, the Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus still come together for discussions quite frequently, right up to the present day.



Venerable Ajaan Brom

19

The Story of Venerable Ajaan Brom

We are near the end of this book *'Paṭipadā: Venerable Ācariya Mun's Path of Practice'* and it seems appropriate to write about an important *Ācariya* who was a direct follower of Venerable Ajaan Mun. This will be a memorial and a record to his excellence for those who have not seen his biography.

He was known as Venerable Ajaan Brom (Brahma) and he used to live at Wat Baan Dong Yen, in the district of Nong Haan, Udon Thani province, where he died a short while ago.

I read the short biography that was printed and distributed at the time of his cremation, but since then I have forgotten some of the details of it, for his cremation took place on 6th March 2514 BE (1971 CE). However it is probable that many people have not read that biography, so I shall repeat the story in brief to show what kind of Bhikkhu he was. The following account will not cover the period of his life when he was a lay person, but only those incidents which were important as well as the practices which he did as a Bhikkhu.

Before he was ordained, it seems that he announced to the world at large that he intended to renounce all his possessions and give everything away, both those which were material and those which had life, until there was nothing left. Then he and his wife would leave home and become ordained and follow the way of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* so as to reach their state in this life, for they no longer wanted to go on living through endless births and deaths in this world anymore. Those who wanted to help may come and receive these gifts and take them away freely to use as their own property without any recompense being expected in return. But they must come within a specified time limit, which he announced, and it seems that he allowed many days for giving away these things. Many poor and needy people came to him and received gifts, and this went on until all his possessions of all kinds had gone in a few days. He had many possessions, for he had been a wealthy and well established merchant in that region, who dealt in all sorts of goods. But for the whole of his married life he had no children and he just had his wife

and various relatives, all of whom felt very happy with his renunciation of his possessions in order to become ordained. When he had given away everything, he and his wife separated and went their own ways. He went and became ordained as a *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu,* after which he set out to reach Venerable Ajaan Mun where he entrusted his life as a monk *(Brahmacariyā)* to him. His wife went in a different direction to be ordained as a Nun with the intention of gaining freedom from *saṁsāra* in accordance with her resolution, and they both lived the Good Life *(Brahmacariyā)* for the remainder of their lives without becoming restless and concerned in the material world. Both of them should be a good example to others.

When Venerable Ajaan Brom became ordained he could not at first do as he had intended. For he had to stay with Venerable Ajaan Sāra who trained him for some time until it was appropriate for him to leave. Then he went wandering in the district of Chiang Mai to find Venerable Ajaan Mun who, at that time, was also living there. It is said that Venerable Ajaan Brom wandered through all sorts of places until he crossed over into Burma and stayed in many places there. He was accompanied by Venerable Ajaan Chob who had a very determined and courageous character who stuck by him whatever happened. They were like two flawless diamonds attached to the same ring as friends going the same way. This story was related to me by Venerable Ajaan Brom, but I cannot remember all he said and I can only recall what I have written. I also apologise for any errors which I may make.

Venerable Ajaan Brom had many strange and wonderful experiences associated with the practices which he did, both inwardly and externally, while he was in Thailand and abroad as well; but I'm afraid we must leave them and pass on. Hearing him tell his story made me feel so sorry for his plight in some parts of it, spellbound with excitement in other parts and full of admiration for his ability to fight against hardship, and also for what he experienced in his self-development. In addition, the way in which he walked right through thick jungle in various places, where in those days there were no villages or people was quite remarkable. At such times he had to put up with great hardships and privations, for he was rarely in a place where he had enough to provide sufficient for the body and ease of mind. He said that some days they would come across a village and get enough food on *piṇḍapāta* to keep them going. But on other days they had to go without and put up with feelings of hunger and weakness and spend the nights in the hills and forests when they had lost

their way. He said that it was especially difficult when they were wandering in Burma, because the way they went there was nothing but hills and jungle full of animals and cats (tigers, leopards, etc.) of all sorts. Sometimes they just had to trust their lives to fate when the suffering and hardship was more than they could bear to go on facing for another day. When he got to that point it seemed as if everything within him came to the end of its tether all at once. His breath seemed as if it would no longer go on due to all the many and varied circumstances oppressing and tormenting his body and mind. But afterwards he managed to put up with each event as it happened as each hour and day passed by.

His *citta* had been developing steadily and he had confidence in himself when he finally reached Venerable Ajaan Mun where he was taught and trained continuously from then on. Some years, Venerable Ajaan Mun kindly helped him by letting him spend the *vassa* period together with him. At other times he used to come and go frequently — in other words, he would go out wandering to develop himself in various places wherever he felt like going. Then when any problem arose in his heart he would return for further teaching and training from Venerable Ajaan, which took place from time to time. He spent many years training with Venerable Ajaan Mun while he was in Chiang Mai province, and when Venerable Ajaan returned to Sakon Nakhon province, he also went with him.

This *Ācariya* had a very earnest and serious character and he was also very determined and resolute, as may be seen by the way he disposed of all his wealth and valuables and then became ordained in a really true way. But as to the results of the practice, which he gained in the form of a refuge for his heart, we may say briefly that he gained abundant "wealth" of the most wonderful and priceless kind on a remote hill in the province of Chiang Mai where he was living with the hill tribes. This is what he told me, unless my memory is faulty; but I cannot remember the names of the village, the hill, or the district where he gained freedom and finally got rid of the burden of the round of birth and death from his heart. After Venerable Ajaan Mun had returned to stay in the province of Sakon Nakhon for several years, Venerable Ajaan Brom followed him and spent the *vassa* at Wat Suddhāvāsa in Sakon Nakhon province. This was about the year 2486 of the Buddhist era (CE 1943). After this he returned and built a Wat in his home village, Ban Dong Keng, in the district of Nong Han in the province of Udon Thani. This was where he came from and this is where he was cremated, as has been already related.

On the day of his cremation the place was full of Buddhists who came to share in the merit of the occasion. They came from far and near as well as many from Bangkok who had sacrificed their time to come. Many also came from Chiang Mai despite the time and trouble it took to get there. But in fact all of those who went to his funeral thought nothing of the difficulty and what it cost them, for their aim was just to make the occasion to be a fitting tribute to this *Ācariya.* So it turned out that the Wat where they held his funeral, which normally seemed so spacious and open to everyone, was not big enough and became cramped and congested because of the large number of people, both the lay people as well as the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras* who came crowding in on that occasion. But even so, they were not boisterous or turbulent, because each of them had come with pure intentions and faithful hearts, free from ulterior motives which may have been a danger both to the occasion and to the people who had gone there.

On the night of this occasion, the organisers in the Wat had arranged for the teaching of *Kammaṭṭhāna* to be broadcast to the people there for the whole night after the cremation. For this they had invited several competent *Kammaṭṭhāna Ācariyas* to give a series of talks. Some of them were general talks about Dhamma, some were about *samādhi–Dhamma,* and some were about *paññā–Dhamma.* But the subjects changed about so that some would be of value to those who were ordained and who followed the *Dhutanga Kammaṭṭhāna* tradition, for generally speaking they rarely had any chance to hear such talks. Some would be of value for those white robed followers *(Upāsaka and Upāsikā)* who were interested in the practice of Dhamma and some for the general run of lay people.

The actual cremation took place at about 10 pm on the night of 6th March 2514 BE (CE 1971). At the time of his cremation, the crowd of Bhikkhus, *Sāmaṇeras* and lay people who had come to pay their respects with sorrow, was very large. All of them were very calm and peaceful, which was a delight to see, and it seemed almost as if they were all recalling and contemplating the virtues and the refined excellence of Venerable Ajaan Brom who had done the practice with such resolute courage and sacrificed everything without any regrets or longing. In addition, he had bestowed his enlightening Dhamma on all his followers, both those who were ordained and lay followers, and both men and women in large numbers. Now he had gone from them, having submitted to the law of impermanence *(aniccaṁ)* which none of them could halt or resist even for a moment however much they respected, revered and loved

him. Some of those who had never seen or met him may have tended to think more about the law of *aniccaṁ,* which is Dhamma that teaches the world and oneself, rather than thinking of his Dhamma virtue.

When they had actually cremated his body, there were only the official organisers in the vicinity of the crematorium, who attended to his body. Nobody else was allowed to come in and interfere. This may have been because the previous frequent announcements had warned off the crowd — or may be it was due to the etiquette of those Bhikkhus who saw danger and value at that time. But it is not easy to resolve this speculation.

His Bones Turned into Relics in a Very Short Time

Many of those who came to Venerable Ajaan Brom's cremation were given very small bits of his cremated bone as a reminder and as a form of their *Pūjā,* so they went out to many places. Therefore it was not possible to keep track of them to know if any of them had changed their nature or not. But not long afterwards, a Bhikkhu who had been given some of the bone, brought it and showed it to us here in this Wat. This bone had already turned into two relics of Venerable Ajaan Brom.

A bit later I saw in the "Sri Sapadah" magazine, that some of their share of bone from his cremation had also turned into relics, while other bits in the same container had not changed. One could not help feeling full of wonder at his Dhamma virtue, for this was a sure sign that he had fully attained the essence of Dhamma. This had been the assumption of those who practise the way for a long time already, but they had never said so openly in the way that people in the world do so. Because this was a matter of Dhamma, in which those who practise Dhamma should be self-controlled and careful, to keep within the bounds of what is right and proper.

Gaining Freedom From Dukkha

Venerable Ajaan Brom told me in 2486 BE (1943 CE), that he had gained freedom entirely, from the thick jungle of *kilesa* and the great mass of discontent and suffering *(dukkha),* and that he had done this while staying in the

province of Chiang Mai, but it is uncertain just when this actually happened. Afterwards he returned to the province of Sakon Nakhon, therefore in short, this means that from 2485 BE, when he went to spend the *vassa* in Wat Suddhāvāsa in Sakon Nakhon until he died in 2513 BE is 28 — 29 years. This is enough to show that from the day that his *citta* gained freedom and ruled over the *khandhas* with a pure heart, until the last day of his life was quite a long time. Therefore it is reasonably to be expected that his bone remains should become relics very quickly — in less than a year.

In the province of Chiang Mai, it is known that three monks became *Arahant* there in the present age. They are, firstly Venerable Ajaan Mun, secondly Venerable Ajaan Brom and thirdly Venerable Ajaan … who is still alive;[152] the latter two being followers of Venerable Ajaan Mun. As for other provinces in Thailand, those in the Northeast (Isaan), such as Sakon Nakhon, have also had their share of remarkable Bhikkhus who have become "pure in Dhamma", no less than Chiang Mai. But they are not well known, because they are not people who talk about these things nor do they advertise themselves and they are only known amongst themselves and those who practise the way.

The places referred to in the last paragraph refer to the forests and hills of the respective districts, which is where those who practise the way go to stay, to practise and to attain the path and fruition as they had intended to. But they do so quietly, without anyone knowing about it. So if some of their stories are not written down here as evidence that it can be done now, the Dhamma of Buddhism will appear to be mere talk — whereas its true nature is not visible and apparent. Therefore I decided to jump into the middle of a bag of thorns and write down some of these stories as objectively as possible, although I'm afraid that I shall not be free of some sharp criticism that will come from those who disagree and disbelieve some aspects of these stories, as has already happened to some extent.

What has been written here is based: Firstly on a firm faith in the skill and ability of those who practise the way and who have managed to attain the basic ground of *citta* and Dhamma which is firm and unshakeable; and who also have a full and unwavering confidence in themselves. Secondly, in the way they speak out, proclaiming the "Rightly Taught *(Svākkhāta)* Dhamma" with complete confidence and certainty in it. For this is what the Lord Buddha bequeathed to us, saying that it will be this "Rightly Taught Dhamma" that lasts

152. This may be Venerable Ajaan Khao or Ajaan Wairn, both of whom have since died.

and remains unaltered by any of the popularly accepted conventions which are so artful and deceptive and become part and parcel of the person who takes them up and relies upon them. But they give him no sense of confidence that he will be able to go on breathing freely in the future. Thirdly, in the way they speak about the field of practice *(paṭipatti)* and the attainments *(paṭivedha)* that come from it. For this is how they show up the results of their practice whether great or small — showing how this way is not worthless, nor is it a waste of one's time and effort which gives no results in response to all the weariness and difficulty involved in doing the practice.

All the *Ācariyas* that have been mentioned up to this point are fully possessed of the Path *(Magga)* of practice, which has *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā,* fully developed, and they are beyond all reasonable criticism. They are the *Ācariyas* who should attain the fruit of *vimutti* — freedom — of the kind that accords with the causes and results which come following the undisputed truth of the Dhamma teaching. As for those who still have faith that Dhamma exists as Dhamma, they are the *Ācariyas* who should reach the Path and the Fruition, with their practice following the policy of Dhamma and they can live in the field of *"Puññakkheta"* — the field of merit and righteousness — without any suspicions of doubt or uncertainty.

In writing about these *Ācariyas,* I feel no doubts or reservations — nor is it likely to vex the hearts of those who read about them. On the other hand, we must accept that anybody who thinks in any different way from the above, has the power and the right to do so without consulting or getting permission from anyone else. For it is said in the Dhamma that:

> "Beings are the owners of their own *kamma,* and the results of their *kamma* belong to them alone."

Other people therefore should not go and interfere, and try to take on a share of the responsibility, which would be contrary to this aspect of the law of *kamma* that has been proclaimed and taught with complete certainty since ages past.

Venerable Ajaan Brom once told me about how timid and incomplete he was, soon after he had been ordained, and also about a time when he went to stay in the hills of Chiang Mai province. Not long after his ordination and before he had even been one *vassa* period in the robe (i.e., less than a year), he went out wandering in quiet and peaceful places in the hills in the district

of Na Kae of Nakhon Phanom Province. On his return trip, he followed the track which went straight from Na Kae District to Sakon Nakhon Province. In those days there was no road, and even the cart track or footpath was heavily overgrown and was hardly visible in places. Because along this track, about four kilometres from the provincial town of Na Kae there was a large expanse of thick jungle, its length running along by a range of mountains, full of all sorts of animals like tigers and other cats. The type of place that timid people would call very frightening and would never want to go to.

By chance, it happened that Venerable Ajaan Brom reached this forest in the evening, just as it was getting dark. He had no candles left to use in his lantern and if he had decided to go on regardless, he was afraid he would lose his way. For nobody lived there and there were no houses or villages anywhere near, and even the path was overgrown and blocked by trees and forest in places. It was quite different from the same place nowadays where there are villages and people everywhere — and even the thick forest has gone without a trace, to be replaced by fields, houses and plantations.

So Ajaan Brom decided that he would have to spend the night there. He went off a little way to one side of the path and hung his umbrella tent (klod) from the branch of a tree. Then groping about in the twilight, he gathered up some dry leaves from around the place, enough to act as bedding on the bare ground so that he could lie down. From then on he rested and did his meditation practice. About 9 pm, which was during the time he was sitting in *samādhi* practice with a degree of apprehension and mistrust of his surroundings in various ways, it happened that a deer came softly and quietly into the area where he was staying, quite unaware of his presence. As soon as the deer which is a timid and cautious animal, emerged from the surrounding forest and came face to face with the Ajaan's umbrella tent and mosquito net which hung from it, forming a complete enclosure around him, it let out a single loud cry, "Kek!" just once, while it jumped back into the forest, hitting its head against trees and branches, and crashing through the undergrowth with a lot of noise. The Venerable *Ācariya* also was so startled and frightened so that without thinking he shouted out "Euk-aak," and the deer, hearing the sound of a person, was even more frightened and ran as hard as it could go deep into the forest.

As soon as the Ajaan regained his composure and mindfulness, he thought with shame how incompetent he had been, and he could not help laughing at himself. For as he said:

> "There I was, a true Bhikkhu, having been ordained after renouncing and disposing of all my possessions and I was prepared to accept death wherever it may come to me with a ready heart absorbed in Dhamma, so how was it that a deer, a most mild and ordinary forest animal should frighten me so much? It was not like a tiger, a boar, a ghost or a demon which may reasonably instil fear into people; and in fact it ran away in blind panic, crying out in genuine fear of me, having been startled and lost all self-control. But I am a man and a full *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu,* yet I was so startled and afraid of it that I could hardly breathe. This is really a worthless state, having no mindfulness to restrain the heart so that it gave in to a low and inferior state of the kind that makes an unseemly display of self and our religion for that deer to hear quite clearly so that it ran crashing into the forest without thought of any other dangers. If that deer had been clever enough to realise that Bhikkhus who truly believe in *kamma* and who have renounced everything are not timid and easily frightened like this *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhu* who is displaying such fear that he has lost all self-control, it would probably see the funny side of it and go away roaring with laughter at me for sure, and I would be so embarrassed, having no face left in my standing as a Bhikkhu at all. But fortunately, it was just an animal concerned for its life, which was passing by, and such a consideration never arose, for it has no interest in whether this person was a madman or a good normal person."

Venerable Ajaan Brom said that once when he was living in the hills of Chiang Mai province an event took place of a more normal kind which did not make a special impression on him. It was about 5 o'clock in the afternoon and he had gone to bathe in a deep stream at the foot of the hill. He never expected anything unusual to happen then, because he had been going to this stream every afternoon. But this day, he was walking along the stream which is in a narrow gorge with steep banks, and when he had about reached the place he was making for after going along a part of the stream where it was narrow and winding, he turned a corner and suddenly reached that place at the very same time as a large bear coming in the opposite direction. They both saw each other at the same time and there was no easy escape route. The large bear was very startled and frightened and leapt up the steep bank and slipped down. Again it leapt up and slipped down and went on doing this four or five times without success before it realised that it could not escape that way, so it turned round and ran back the way it came.

As for the Venerable Ajaan, one could not say that he was afraid, nor that he was not afraid, because both of them were so startled and bewildered by their encounter that neither had any mindfulness left to give them any self-control. This gave a clear indication in this incident of how both of them at that moment were overwhelmed by a fear of death. For the bear jumped up and tried to climb the bank in a frenzy of fear, while the Venerable Ajaan just stood there stamping his feet, so the ground round there became all disturbed and muddy, as if the clay had been mixed up for making bricks or pottery. Meanwhile he had been making noises, saying "Ow! Ow...," continuously without being aware of what he was doing. After this big and amicable bear which arouses one's sympathy, had gone away, Venerable Ajaan said that he walked straight back to where he was staying, while seeing the funny side of this incident and feeling compassion for this bear which was so knowing and so good. What he had not realised was that he was dripping with sweat as though he was about to die during this incident. In fact he was soaked and more wet than if he had bathed normally.

Venerable Ajaan said that he had not continued with his original purpose of having a bath and had left the place straight away because he thought it was likely that after this bear had jumped about and ran away, it would be exhausted and may return to lie down on a submerged rock and soak in the water to relax. For, he was afraid that to meet up with it once again might bring a response quite different from the first time. The next day he again went to bathe in the same place, and when he got to the point where he first saw the bear face to face, he took the opportunity to examine the characteristics of the fear of death, which is common to all beings in the world. Having looked at it well, he said that he couldn't help laughing out loud, because the marks made by the bear in trying to climb that bank and his own footprints where he had been stamping up and down looked more like the work of ten bears and ten *Kammaṭṭhāna Bhikkhus* playing at sports. The area was so messed about and muddy and hardly any of the original ground was visible. Looking at it made him feel horrified as well as compassion for the bear and this happened every day, for the place acted as a reminder, when he went there to have his daily bathe. He would see his own footprints as well as those of the bear displaying the fear of death every day until he left that district.

Normally when a bear comes across a person unexpectedly, it will jump on him and claw and bite him and injure him to put him out of action first,

then it will run away. It is preferable to meet a tiger rather than a bear, for the bear will attack first before escaping, whereas the tiger will only attack if it has been shot and injured, and then it is more fierce and dangerous than a bear. Therefore, the Venerable Ajaan could not help being appalled by this incident even though it turned out to be harmless.

I feel that making the effort to write about the practice of *Kammaṭṭhāna* following the way of Venerable Ajaan Mun is a heavy responsibility. Although the burden is not so heavy as it was in writing Venerable Ajaan Mun's biography, and I have some room to breathe here. But even though the burden of writing is heavy I have constantly tried to put whatever ability I have into it. As to whether all of you who have read and understood it up to this point will agree with it and see it as right or wrong and good or bad in any way is uncertain. But I must accept whatever criticism is made without recourse to making any correction, because in both cases (the biography and this book), I have already put everything I can into them with whatever ability I have and I cannot do any more.

The number of Bhikkhus who followed, and still follow the lineage of Venerable Ajaan Mun are many. They come from the early period, the middle, and the final years of his Teaching. As well as those who followed his disciples and who received the same teaching and practice which was handed down to them, right down to the present day. But in writing this book, their names have been withheld — as was said previously — in those cases where their ways of practice have been described. This is because it would make difficulties for myself and for those whose stories have been disclosed. This has already happened in the case of those whose names were disclosed in the biography of Venerable Ajaan Mun, for there seemed to be some objections relating to those whose names were mentioned in connection with the events that happened to them. Some of them also said that the writer should do the same with himself! So I must accept their viewpoint and I have not gone against their wishes in writing this book. Their names have been withheld and only their story told — which involves the way they did the practice.

The way of practice of each Bhikkhu will be hard and acetic or easy in the various aspects of Dhamma accordingly, such as the hardship involved in not lying down, or taking little food. Those who work with urgency and

consistently at such practices until they see the results of them quite clearly apparent, arising steadily, will not feebly give up and slide backwards. In fact, the results that are attained from all such methods are similar and consist of a state of calm and happiness in the heart — the *citta* — as well as the arousing of mindfulness and wisdom in successive stages, for these are the Dhammas which help and support the *citta* to reach the final goal in all cases. Therefore it is important in the practising of Dhamma that the aspect of Dhamma, which means the preliminary repetition (*parikamma* word) that is used in meditation practice to control and guide the *citta,* should be one which suits the individual's tendencies of character at each stage and level.

But it is not really correct for the *Ācariya* who trains and teaches his followers, to decide and determine this on his own, and then to reveal this one aspect of Dhamma to all his many followers for them to practise in their meditation, without having taken into account the characters of his followers and their different temperaments. For this one method will arouse obstacles in those whose characteristics are not suited to this aspect of Dhamma, and they will not get the results which they should get.

The *Ācariya* just needs to be there to point out the way to go, after having explained many aspects and paths of Dhamma, so that those who have come to learn and train themselves may choose one of them and then go and practise it until they get results, after which they should go and tell the *Ācariya* about it. Then if in what they tell the *Ācariya* there is anything that he sees which needs correcting or developing in any way, he will point it out as it may be in each individual.

But it is not for the *Ācariya* to determine on his own what methods of Dhamma training his followers should do. The only exceptions to this are those rare *Ācariyas* who have the greatest skill in the practice of Dhamma and the faculty of knowing *"Paracittavijjā"* — which is the ability to know the characteristic tendencies *(upanissaya)* and the present state of the *citta* of other people, as well as being skilled in methods of teaching them with quick wit and clever ways. This makes them able to decide what is the right *parikamma* for others to use, by virtue of what they have found in their own experience to be right. But nowadays, where can one find anybody who is so able and skilled in Dhamma as this? It is far more difficult to find such a person than to find a perfect flawless diamond. It is even difficult enough to find someone who has practised the way until he has come to know the causes and results of each of

the different kinds of *kilesas* which arise in his heart. Until he has been able to remove them in a way that is clearly evident to him, and then put what he has attained into teaching others in the right way with assured certainty.

To find such a Teacher is so difficult that it has almost reached the point where people say that the state of "wealth" in the Buddhist Religion is worthless and that one can no longer find any essence of truth *(sāra)* in it, even though it is the system which has given a guarantee of the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna* since the Enlightenment of the Great and Original Teacher, and has upheld it right up to the present. When this is the case amongst those who are Buddhists, is it likely that any of them will have enough of the faculty of *Paracittavijjā* — to know the characteristic tendencies and the present state of the *citta* of other people with confidence? Or with sufficient confidence and certainty to teach just one aspect or method of Dhamma, guaranteed by that within themselves, which gives these teachers complete assurance? And to do this, while at the same time steadily leading their many followers to gain those results which are a refuge for the heart, and to continue until they are able to penetrate into and reach the highest level of Dhamma without changing or altering that one method of Dhamma to adapt it to their changing level of *citta* and level of Dhamma *(bhūmi–citta — bhūmi–Dhamma).* And also without changing or adapting it to the changes that take place in the *kilesas* and *āsavas,* which are more adaptable and changeable in the most intricate ways than the footprints of a herd of cows in a farmyard. In fact it is probable, that anyone teaching in this way does so to give himself power and authority in the status of an *"Ācariya",* to which he has raised himself, rather than because he has the quality of Dhamma in its practical application in his heart. Therefore I feel the greatest misgivings and doubts about teaching by the use of a single method of Dhamma. For I am a Bhikkhu of the kind who has naturally and characteristically had to struggle and strive. So when those who are absorbed and intent on Dhamma ask me questions, I answer in the manner of — "one hand holding a snake and the other hand holding a fish", so that those who want to train themselves can choose to take up whatever they feel is suitable according to their own disposition, so that it will not then go against their characteristic tendencies. If they grasp only one hand, so as to get the hand which holds the fish, it will be of some value to themselves and to others also. But if they grasp only the other so as to get the hand that holds the snake, they will be very harmful and dangerous to those who come to learn from them.

In other words, those who come to be trained by them are taught only one random aspect or way of Dhamma and that's all, as though the *Sāsana* only has that one way of teaching the world. Whereas, in fact, the Great Teacher and all the *Sāvakas* did not complete the task with only one aspect of Dhamma but with many different aspects. In addition, the Lord Buddha taught them and taught the world enough aspects of Dhamma to suit the ability of beings in the world. But this would seem to have been a very small proportion of what was available to his knowledge and skill in his basic capacity as the Lord Buddha — who was the supreme Teacher *(Sāsadā)* of the world.

20

Venerable Ajaan Mun's Practice & His Methods of Teaching

We are getting near the end of this book, so it is appropriate that we should discuss the methods of practising *citta bhāvanā* that Venerable Ajaan Mun used, as well as the methods which he used in teaching those followers of his who went into training under him. This may act as sort of a guide to the way, in the form of a brief summary. But in particular, the way that he himself practised will first be considered, after which, the way he taught his close followers will be described. In this section, the names of the places where he practised and gained results will not be given, because they have already been detailed in his biography. So the following account will only deal with his methods of practising *citta bhāvanā* and all external phenomena such as contact with *Pretas,* ghosts, *Devaputta*, *Devatā*, *Nāgas*, *Garuḍas,* etc., will be omitted as they have already been described.

The nature of Venerable Ajaan Mun's *citta* was unusually dynamic, venturesome, quick and sensitive to whatever events he came into contact with. To begin with, in doing the practice of *bhāvanā,* he used the preparatory repetition *(parikamma)* "Buddho..." As soon as his *citta* dropped into a concentrated, calm state, he saw a "*nimitta*", sometimes of himself, dead in front of him, sometimes of a corpse in front of him — as has already been described in his biography. Then he took that *nimitta* which had appeared before him as an indicator of the way his meditation practice should go from then on by defining it as being loathsome *(paṭikūla)* in various ways, according to where his greatest skill in *sati* and *paññā* lay. He would sometimes define it as breaking down and decomposing until all that was left of it was a skeleton; then he would define the bones as separate from each other, scattered about right in

front of him. Then sometimes he would also sweep them together in a heap, and set them up to be burnt by fire until they became ashes in front of him. Both the corpse and his own dead body were visual *nimittas* right there before him and he defined them in the same way, but at different times, just depending on whichever was suited to the contemplation he was doing.

After he had induced the fire to burn the bones down to fine ashes, his *citta* concentrated down to reach the basic level of *samādhi* in complete absorption and rested there for a long time, lasting for hours before withdrawing. As soon as his *citta* had withdrawn, he went on doing the same forms of practice as before. He said that from the day that his *citta* manifested these *nimittas,* and he could set them up to be as he wanted them, right through to cremating the remains of the corpse, he could go down and see them quite clearly in his heart at any time he wanted, regardless of whether he was standing, walking, sitting or lying down, for whatever his situation was, he would set up that corpse, which he had turned into a skeleton and see it as being attached intimately to his own body at all times. The only exception was at those special times when he contemplated that corpse in various ways after which the *citta* would then concentrate down into the state of *samādhi* and rest in itself alone for a while. At such times he had no interest or concern for anything.

He could see clearly how the strength of his *citta* began to develop and how he attained the foundation of *samādhi* firmly because of his having gained that *nimitta,* which acted like a grind-stone to sharpen up his *sati* and *paññā* all the time. He went on in this way until he was able to get the skeleton image of that *nimitta* to stay within his own body, so that his body and the skeleton became identified as one, and this went on until he had no doubt as to where this skeleton came from and who became this skeleton.

After this he gave up the practice of defining those characteristics. Because once the *nimitta* image had been entirely identified with himself it became unnecessary for him to define any external image. From then on he took up and defined his own body as the basis of his contemplation, and depending on the dexterity, skill and ability of his *sati* and *paññā,* he would contemplate the body, making it have any characteristics that he determined, as he wanted to. At this stage he said how he felt that his *samādhi* was very strong and stable, because of having depended on the contemplation of the body with *paññā* until the *citta* would relax and very easily concentrate down into *samādhi.*

The word "Buddho" which he had used as his preparatory repetition *(parikamma)* to control and direct the *citta* since he started to practise was dispensed with from the day when that *nimitta* appeared clearly before him. For he then aroused the *nimitta* with the *parikamma "aṭṭhi"* (bones) which acted as the supporting condition for the *citta* instead of "Buddho". All the time he would define them and contemplate them by making them arise, making them change and break up right there in the body, and he would do this in all positions and situations, excepting only those times when he slept. He went on doing this until his body, although still there, turned into the space element *(ākāsa–dhātu)* in conformity with his contemplation. His *citta* was emptied of all material things such as the physical body, due to the coercive power of *sati* and *paññā* which contemplated without ceasing or letting go. He was then skilful in *samādhi* at all levels, and his *vipassanā* (wisdom) at the level of *rūpa–dhamma* (mind forms or images) was both skilful and very fast, to keep up with the mind. *He said that vipassanā of this level makes the citta shine very brightly and it is quite wonderful. If one is carelessly, looking only for pleasure and ease without one's wisdom being clearly aware of the situation, one will probably become addicted and fascinated with this state of voidness thinking that it is Nibbāna, without knowing within oneself by means of understanding, whether it is Nibbāna for certain, or not.* Because all of us have heard that *Nibbāna* is voidness, enough for it to have become embedded in our hearts, but without knowing what characteristics *Nibbāna* is void of. *In particular, the kind of voidness which appeared at this time had something hidden within it. These were the subtle kilesas of his heart.* How then could this ever be the voidness of *Nibbāna?*

Before we can pass beyond the *rūpa–dhamma,* which means the body both internally and externally, by means of various forms of contemplation, *sati* and *paññā* must be whirling around the body nearly the whole time. This excepts only those times when the *citta* of the one who is digging and searching has become weak and tired due to having done too much work; then he must take a rest by entering into the quiet calm of *samādhi* for a while.

As soon as he withdraws from *samādhi,* having regained his strength, he goes on with his contemplative investigation, disentangling the story of the body more and more by using the principle of the three characteristics *(Ti–lakkhaṇa)* as the way to develop. Because the body is a thing of the greatest importance amongst those who practise the way, and with whatever subtlety and skill they are able to contemplate the body, to the same extent they will

tend to become fearless and courageous in practising those methods which they use to progress. This is due to the fact that the body is the dwelling place of the more gross kinds of sexual craving *(rāga–taṇhā)* and conceit *(māna–diṭṭhi),* all of which live in dependence on the body quite frankly and openly. In some cases when people forget themselves and lose their restraint, displaying these things outwardly in a gross and vulgar manner, other people, even though they also have *kilesas,* cannot bear to see it and feel disillusioned, disgusted and fed up with it.

For the above reason, those who practise the way with the aim and full-hearted intention of destroying the *kilesas,* must keep their attention on the parts of the body *(kāya–vibhāga)* until they become skilled at it and can eliminate sexual craving bit by bit, in a way that is clearly apparent to themselves. As to the *kilesa* of conceit or opinionatedness, this is the kind of *kilesa* which is irritating and harmful and penetrates to the heart, one's own and other peoples, more than any other *kilesa.* Generally, this *kilesa* lies, "just inside the door", waiting for a chance to run out and display itself which it does very quickly, and it depends upon *upādāna* — attachment — to the body as its main support. *It is therefore taught in the Four Satipaṭṭhāna (arousing of mindfulness) and the four Ariya Sacca (Noble Truths) which are amongst the most important Dhammas in the teachings of Buddhism, that one should contemplate kāyagatāsati (mindfulness of the body) much and often, until one has overcome all doubt about the body. Then one may pass beyond it, having got rid of all attachment to it.*

Venerable Ajaan Mun was accomplished and very skilled in the practice of mindfully contemplating the body *(kāyānupassanā–satipaṭṭhāna).* He thus had a very wide and precise understanding of all aspects of Dhamma both inwardly and outwardly, and far beyond all others who were then practising the way. He said that when he went beyond body contemplation *(kāyagatā)*, sexual craving ceased to be a problem from then on. This happened in such a way that it was quite unnecessary to ask or discuss it with anyone else (such as an *Ācariya*). To do so would be a waste of time and would show up the stupidity of the one who asked, making a laughing stock of him. Because these are things within oneself, and things which disappear from oneself alone, due to the circumspection of *sati* and *paññā* at this level. Just by attaining the level at which sexual craving *(rāga–taṇhā)* is destroyed and its "corpse" is expelled from the heart, is enough to bring ease and comfortable living to oneself, free from trouble and anxiety. Because sexual craving is a kind of craving which,

so to speak, "eats without ever becoming satisfied", and it disturbs and excites the heart, whispering and teasing suggestively and spreading its influence and dominance over the heart. This makes a person timid, scared, dispirited and feeble in making his way forward for the sake of the Path, Fruition and *Nibbāna,* which is to be found in the sphere of the "Noble Truths" *(Sacca–Dhamma)* and the "setting up of mindfulness" *(Satipaṭṭhāna)* and which may be reached by one who practises the way with effort and striving.

Venerable Ajaan Mun also said that before the body was fully understood and ceased to be a problem in his contemplation of it, the body which he had contemplated in various ways concentrated together and entered into the sphere of the heart. Then all those thoughts and views *(sankhāra)* associated with "uprising and promotion" *(samudaya),* which think of the body as being beautiful, shapely, pleasing and something which everyone has always been satisfied with, as well as all those thoughts and views associated with the Path *(Magga)* which conceptualised the body as being loathsome *(paṭikūla),* undesirable and as being *aniccaṁ, dukkhaṁ* and *anattā,* all died away at the same time as the image of the body which concentrated together and went into the heart. *"Subha",* the beautiful and desirable aspect, and *"asubha"*, the ugly and undesirable aspect, were then both disposed of as paths for the heart to go along, so that it then passes by between these two Dhammas without any remaining attachment to them. No *nimittas* remained clinging on to the heart to deceive it with beauty or ugliness, and every time he did any contemplation of the body, he just saw the *citta* which displayed the body's characteristics as an internal image which then died away and ceased.

From then on his *citta* was devoid of all material things including both the body which remained with him and all other things which existed externally. No more did he have any *nimittas* arising which were symbols of beauty *(subha)* and ugliness *(asubha)* as he used to prior to this stage. There was just brightness and a *citta* devoid of all things throughout its field, and it turned about in contemplation with mindfulness and wisdom acting as the driving force leading him onward.

The next thing that steadily became the focus of attention for mindfulness and wisdom to work on were: *vedanā* — feeling, *saññā* — memory, *sankhāra* — thought processes, and *viññāṇa* — consciousness — which are the Dhammas that arise with, and cease simultaneously with, the heart; and also "*avijjā*", the origin and source of all the *kilesas.*

His Contemplation of the Paccayākāra

Venerable Ajaan Mun said:

"The *Paccayākāra*[153] may be divided into two aspects as described in the text books. The first is the inter-related process of arising and development of *avijjā;* and the second is the process of the cessation of *avijjā* which takes place step by step until nothing is left of it. This is analogous to the plan of a house which shows one how to built it from the start until it is completed. But even though when demolishing a house there is no plan of how to do it, such as that which shows the way to demolish *avijjā,* it must rely upon the person who carries out the demolition to think out the way to do it before starting; and he must go about it with mindfulness and wisdom which are the pair of Dhammas that are needed to bring about the desired results."

"In the old texts, the arising and ceasing of *avijjā* is merely listed, thus: *avijjā* is the condition *(paccaya)* which gives rise to the *sankhāra; sankhāra* is the condition which gives rise to *viññāṇa;...* and so on, to... coming to birth *(sambhavanti),* all of which is on the side of 'uprising' *(samudaya).* On the other hand, the ceasing of *avijjā* acts in a similar way as being the condition for the ceasing of *sankhāra, viññāṇa, nāma–rūpa* ... and so on, the cessation of each one being the condition for the following one to cease. Then there are no *kilesas* remaining to act as the seed of further becoming and birth. This is the side of 'cessation' *(nirodha)* — as the old texts describe the end of *avijjā* saying that it is *'nirujjhanti'* (ceased or vanished)."

"But these two aspects of *avijjā,* the first being the development and uprising of *avijjā,* causing the *citta* to become associated with creating and branching out into the realms of existence and birth as animals and people, until it reaches old age, decrepitude and finally death; the second being the suppressing and removing of *avijjā* so that it is entirely dispelled from the heart, thus ending the process of continual becoming and birth — as was done by all those, such as the Lord Buddha, who revealed *Nibbāna* by quenching *avijjā,* were both explained. Or rather the outline of the process that spreads out from *avijjā,* as well as that which spreads out from the cessation of *avijjā,* were explained. But it does not explain the method of increasing and developing *avijjā* and how it is done so that *avijjā* shall grow

153. *Paccayākāra*: Literally means "The mode of causes". In other words, the *Paṭiccasamuppāda.*

strong enough to lead beings endlessly through the round of birth and death. Nor does it explain the method of diminishing and destroying *avijjā* and how it should be done, so that *avijjā* shall be weakened steadily until it can be dispelled from the heart entirely, with no possibility of making that heart from which *avijjā* has been dispelled fall back into the round of birth and death. For *paccayākāra* only explains the above processes."

"Someone, who practises to diminish and get rid of *avijjā,* must depend on the Four Noble Truths or the Four *Satipaṭṭhāna* as the way to do it. For these are the places in which *avijjā* is concentrated. Venerable Ajaan said that once his *citta* had entered into a state devoid of all *rūpa–dhamma,*[154] all that was left was to fasten onto *the sankhāras, viññāṇa,* and the *vedanā citta* (the *sankhāras* being the heart's composers; *viññāṇa* — consciousness — being that which contacts and acknowledges all kinds of things; and the *vedanā–citta* — the feeling *citta* — being that which displays the results that become apparent, coming from the 'composing' and 'acknowledging' by way of *viññāṇa*) with *sati–paññā* which also dwells in the same place as they do. Because the composing[155] of the *sankhāras* goes out from the *citta* and the acknowledging of *viññāṇa* also goes out from the *citta.*[156] All these things then variously die away and drop to the *citta* when *sati* follows and keeps up with them and *paññā* keeps on to them, finding out and critically analysing the situation as it unfolds and it is impossible for these things to develop and become strong."

"Just following and knowing about what the *sankhāras* and *viññāṇa* are composing and acknowledging is not enough to satisfy the heart which has 'automatic'[157] *sati* and *paññā* as its guardian the whole time without ever failing. For they can go still further, searching and digging down to the root, the origin where the *sankhāras* and *viññāṇa* arise, so as to know where they come from and what it is that drives them relentlessly and continually to arise, never letting up or stopping. In fact, the one that drives them on is the real *avijjā,* and it is here that the contemplative investigation of *avijjā* must take place in order truly to pull it out by the roots. In other words, to dig and search in the heart, which is where the house and home of *avijjā* is

154. See footnote 5 on page 4.

155. The Thai word "prung" means to concoct, to compound, compose, cook or to embellish. The Lord Buddha said: "The *sankhāras* put together what is put together."

156. The *sankhāras* and *viññāṇa* are parts or aspects of the *citta,* whereas the functions of them project situations and appearances outwardly in the World, or as if in the World.

157. "Automatic" is descriptive of the meaning of the terms *Mahā Sati* and *Mahā Paññā.*

deeply embedded, and then to see the body of *avijjā* break up, disintegrate and fall away at the moment when *Mahā Sati* and *Mahā Paññā* reach it. This is the way to contemplate *avijjā* and the right way to extract *avijjā* from the heart by following the way of *Magga* (the Path) and *Phala* (the Fruition) which the Great Teacher rightly taught. It is not a way which is merely to be read about in the pages of the text books and then to be discussed and argued about incessantly until one's mind is in a whirl, letting *avijjā* make trouble and tease one and laugh in amusement. For not a single one of the *kilesas* is disturbed or hurt in the least by such discussions."

"We are Buddhists with the one and only Great Teacher as our Teacher, and so we should use reason in following the Lord. We must not have mere opinions and conceit *(diṭṭhi–māna)* as the only guide to our views and theories, as if the old text books were filled with *kilesas* and evil ideas, and then to indulge in argument and disputation with others — instead of curing the *kilesas!* All we get from doing this sort of thing is a lot of windy talk without any substance which one could hold to as being valuable. If we act in this manner, however much we learn and know when we enter the (boxing) ring of disputation, the more able we are the worse we become and there is no sign of the 'man of wisdom' left, who follows the way of the Great Teacher *(Sāsadā)* and his Teaching *(Sāsana–Dhamma)*."

"The real *avijjā–taṇhā* dwells in the heart. It has also built its organisation[158] in the hearts of people and other beings, and it is only here in our hearts that we can weaken it and destroy it. The organisation of *avijjā–taṇhā* never arises, nor is it built up, anywhere else, nor can its demolition take place anywhere else. When *avijjā* has died and dropped away completely, then and then only can one see the stupidity, the delusion, the infatuation of all people and other beings who are subject to its compulsion and tyranny — and how this incredible stupidity and torment are there in them the whole time. Even though they do have some pleasure and happiness, it is short lived and fleeting like lightening flashes. Yet beings in the world are satisfied in their delusion and live together in a spell-bound manner, never thinking whether they are in danger of harm coming to them and how serious and extensive it may be."

"But when such a person and his *citta* has been cleansed and well polished throughout, even though he remains the same person, he is entirely differ-

158. This includes all the *kilesas* as well as the way they adapt to the world, other people and things, such as likes, dislikes, fads and fancies — and so on — both internal and external.

ent from what he was, as different as the earth and sky. The *citta,* which has become free from the power of *avijjā,* no longer remains within the limits of the restrictions that apply to all things in the relative world *(loka–sammuti).* For this *citta* is utterly free in a manner which is beyond the ability of anyone to guess or speculate about its nature, and this is what they call the realm of ultimate happiness. It is the ground of those who have power above and beyond the state of relative conventions, to possess it and experience it."

"If we want to know and see this, we must not be lazy, for this laziness is a ploy of all the *kilesas, taṇhā* and *avijjā* to lure us away. All of us here are Bhikkhus, complete with all that is necessary. We must rouse ourselves up! Don't be dull and stupid and let the *kilesas* come out to display their conceit by behaving in a manner against the way of Dhamma, the Dhamma which leads us out of this mass of *Dukkha.* For to do this would be a waste of this life in which one has been born and become a vessel, well suited to the *Sāsana–Dhamma* both in the circumstances of one's birth and social status at the present time."

At this point Venerable Ajaan finished his talk about *avijjā.*

In this talk, Venerable Ajaan, with *mettā,* both showed us the valuable result which arises from the extraction of *avijjā,* this being: "the knowing of freedom" *(vijjā–vimutti),* as well as giving a sharp, stimulating talk on Dhamma to his followers once again, to act as a constant reminder to them which they would never forget. It made them "sit up and take notice" of it, as the reader may learn for himself in what we have written above.

Generally speaking, it was a characteristic of Venerable Ajaan Mun when he talked of the higher levels of Dhamma, that his manner of speaking and behaviour displayed an intense concentration appropriate to each level of Dhamma. The effect of this on those who were not used to his behaviour was to make them apprehensive and afraid, thinking that he was scolding them and chastising them with his words. But in fact it was because the power of Dhamma is a force which was able to cause his mannerisms and behaviour to display these characteristics outwardly. Then as soon as he had finished his Dhamma talk, his manner returned to normal immediately; almost as if nothing unusual had happened a short time before. Sometimes he would even tell some amusing stories and laughter would break through his awesome manner. So nobody was ever able to penetrate and look into his character truly.

The explanation of *avijjā,* which Venerable Ajaan gave, has been recorded in the foregoing paragraphs. As to his explanation of how one gets free from *avijjā,* which he also gave, it was extremely wide and extensive in scope and went right to one's heart. But I'm afraid it was only practicable to give the gist of what he said, which is suitable for all of us who are still at the stage of learning. If we were to go too deeply into it, we probably would not understand and reading it would be a waste of time and would not bring us the value we should get from it.

Venerable Ajaan Mun had no fixed or formal way of teaching. He had no preformed plan, no fixed formula, and no set courses of instruction which were pre-arranged according to a schedule of orderly and progressive teaching of texts, instructions or formal training of body, speech and mind like those institutions in the world which are set up for purposes of training. Instead, he upheld the Dhamma and *Vinaya,* which are a set of well grounded and tested principles, as the pattern for teaching and training his followers; and it depended on each individual to take up and practise whatever aspect of Dhamma both suited their disposition and their liking. If any of them came to Venerable Ajaan and asked him questions based on their own level *(bhūmi)* of *citta* and Dhamma, concerning things that had arisen and appeared out of their *citta–bhāvanā,* he would explain it all to them step by step and case by case. He never forced acceptance nor did he withhold anything in giving help with the Dhamma truth in his heart. But if nobody came to ask any questions he did not normally teach anything.

When the day came for a meeting to teach the Bhikkhus and *Sāmaṇeras,* Venerable Ajaan would teach Dhamma as it is found in practice. He would teach it in a way that was generally applicable, starting from the lower levels of Dhamma, such as the methods of developing *samādhi,* steadily rising to the higher levels. He did this so that those who were at various stages of development could all gain benefit from his Teaching. As to the asking of questions, there were no limits, and it was up to those who had come to train under Venerable Ajaan to ask about any aspect of Dhamma which they had doubts about in their hearts. It did not matter whether their questions were about external things such as the *Pretas,* Ghosts, *Devaputta* or *Devatā,* or about internal things connected with *samādhi* or *paññā,* at any level. He would always clarify and explain what he was asked about in each and every case in whatever way was appropriate to the occasion.

For this reason, I feel sorry that all of you who read this were not able to get intimately close to him when he was alive. For then it would have been possible to see him with your own eyes and to have heard his Dhamma in a way that would have gone to your heart and dispelled all doubts and there would have been no uncertainty or need to guess how he looked and acted in various circumstances, such as those which we are considering at present. For in general, people have similar modes of knowing and feeling, as well as reasons why they listen and accept what is said. After having heard Dhamma from Venerable Ajaan, which both externally and internally was replete with reason and so well expressed that it was a delight to hear and easy to accept and believe. It is unlikely that any of those who heard him would have dared to resist him and cling to their own speculations which had no underlying basis in reason, while speculating that what he said was true or not true as the drift of their thoughts inclined them. Because Venerable Ajaan Mun always practised and acted with reason, and when he knew anything he would know it by the appropriate reasons, which were derived from the basis of practice by way of the heart. When what he knew flowed from him, it therefore always came out from a basis of reason and I never heard him talk in an inconsequential, aimless manner. Therefore, those who went to learn and train under him found it easy to have a deep and abiding faith in him and in all aspects of his Dhamma. This was also true of those aspects of Dhamma which they had not yet experienced, for what he said was so much in accordance with reason that it was easy to believe.

As for myself, I don't feel that I am in any position to make out that I am particularly skilled or good in any special way at all — except perhaps in finding fault and blaming myself fearlessly and often. For there are so many blameworthy things in my heart that I could say it is almost overflowing with them. These things come under the heading of an opinionatedness *(diṭṭhi–māna)* which does not readily give way to others without having first argued and contended to the limit. Only when I could see that my position was truly untenable would I give way, because there was no way left for me to go on arguing.

When it came to Venerable Ajaan Mun, for whom I now have the greatest respect and reverence, before I was able to bow down and submit myself to him like someone who is worthless and hopeless, I had to observe him and listen to what he said and argue with him in the characteristic way of one

who is obviously very opinionated. Sometimes when arguing with Venerable Ajaan it seemed almost as if the Wat would break up and all the Bhikkhus and novices would run away in fright when they heard this cricket in debate against the great lion on the veranda of his hut. I used to argue "tooth and nail" using reasons that I thought were correct until finally I, who was like a cricket that has come to the end of its tune, had to bow down and submit to "wiping his feet" on me by letting him scold and upbraid me as he wished. If you who read this could have seen Venerable Ajaan and the way he acted in various situations, as well as hearing the tone and manner in which he taught and trained us in Dhamma, like the Great Lion whose voice resounds with Dhamma Teaching of all kinds, you would probably have been truly amazed in the same way as all those who actually heard him. Then there would be little room left for uncertainty and doubt about how he looked and acted, nor about his knowledge and understanding of all sorts of aspects of Dhamma which one may otherwise feel uncertain about.

Those who would like a summary of the practice and manner of self-development which were used by Venerable Ajaan should read what has been written about him in this book. Although what I have written about him is not very extensive or detailed in terms of the levels of Dhamma as high, medium or low, I think it will be enough to point out the way of practice for those who are interested. For if I were to put down things which are very unusual and detailed I'm afraid it would be too complex for the reader to work out and put into practice. This is due to Venerable Ajaan's knowledge of *samādhi, paññā* and *vimutti* (gaining freedom), which was extraordinarily broad and far beyond the level of all of us, to be able to follow and comprehend in all its aspects and details. So now it seems appropriate to bring this book of the practice of Venerable Ajaan Mun to an end while it is still within my ability. Whether right or wrong, may the reader forgive me for whatever faults they find in it.

A Brief Summary of His Kammaṭṭhāna Practice

In writing down the practice of *Kammaṭṭhāna* of Venerable Ajaan Mun, I have also brought in stories about many other *Ācariyas* as well without revealing their names.[159] Some of them are quite lengthy while others are short, as

159. As I pointed out earlier in this translation, the names of most of the *Ācariyas* have been revealed, because they have died since the original Thai version was written and printed.

I only wrote about what was necessary. But I did not ask for their permission before doing so, and therefore I must apologise for this and ask forgiveness from all the *Ācariyas* and all those others who practise the way whom I have written about here. I have done this for the help it can bring to people who are interested, both now and in future generations, for they will be able to take up these examples as guides for them to follow and practise. So the stories of these *Ācariyas* and others can be of value to many people far into the future. In the same way as all of us who have depended on the many *Ācariyas* and other people who have maintained the tradition of practice through past ages and up to the present day. Then they may be able to open their eyes and ears, enough not to be always vainly gazing, infatuated with the body of the human being, who should still be clever enough to have the *sati* and *paññā* to save themselves, both in the way of the world and Dhamma. This is why I have written down the manner of practice of these *Ācariyas* and others to act as an indicator of the way to practise. So I hope in this way that it will be of value to some Bhikkhus, *Sāmaṇeras* and other people in general.

For any of you who read this book of the practice of Dhamma, if you find any part of it which suits your inclinations, please take it up and practise it in order to weaken and diminish the disorder and mess that is within each one of our hearts. This refers mostly to a reliance on our own self-orientated opinions, views and ways of doing things, which follow the policy of the *kilesas* and which generally lead us to be lazy in doing what we should be doing.

This practice will also be of value in developing calm and happiness, and the avoidance of restless disturbance both to oneself and others. This is the kind of work which the *kilesas* react against and do not like at all. But in anything that is worthless in so far as the right way of Dhamma is concerned, and anything that is harmful to oneself and others, they enjoy inciting us to do it all the time. The more we do of such things, the more the *kilesas* like them and promote them and think how good they are, even while oneself and the world get nothing but disturbance, trouble and blame from them, because these kinds of activities are neither right nor good.

When people have some Dhamma in their hearts they have a way to know what is right and wrong for themselves and they tend to be careful of what they do, not daring to risk doing anything that is bad and evil or wrong and harmful. In this way people are virtuous because their behaviour is controlled by Dhamma and they have value because of their behaviour. Animals are valuable because of their flesh, skin and other parts of their bodies, and also

because of their strength and ability to do work. When an animal dies, its flesh, skin and the rest of the parts can be sold for money and this has always been a lucrative trade throughout the world, which enables people and other animals to gain benefit and strength. But when a person dies, the remains are of no value, and in fact they are objects of fear and repulsion. Though even when some of them are still alive they tend to amuse themselves in ways that make them give off a pervading stench due to their behaviour which cuts into their wealth and into the hearts of other people as well, causing damage and destruction and making people loathe and fear them greatly. When they die, nobody is sorry — in fact right the opposite, for hundreds or thousands of people have wished that they would die every day so that the earth may rise up a bit once it is relieved of the excessive burdensome weight of such people.

But by making oneself into a good person with knowledge, behaviour, duties and livelihood, all of which are clean and faultless, as a means of promoting one's value, status, authority and good name, one turns oneself into a complete human being, one who will always be of priceless value. Such a person will be revered and accepted in the world without being disliked by anyone, and his honour and reputation will spread abroad like a sweet scent going against the wind. People living all over the place will admire his merit and perfection of character *(pāramī);* and when he dies it will only be the body which disintegrates, whereas all his value and virtue will still be abroad in the world, for it does not disintegrate with the body.

It seems to me that this book of practice may therefore act as an ornament to those who practise the way and also to the "*Kammaṭṭhāna* Circle", enabling them to maintain their elevated status for a long time into the future. For these are the practices which have brought results to those who committed themselves wholeheartedly to whatever aspect of these practices they did, in accordance with their tendencies of character. It is for this reason that this book of practice deals with many forms of practice, many choices and many conditions of life which the readers may use as it suits their various different characteristics, and from which they may get appropriate results. So all these things have been brought together in this one book to make it convenient for those who are interested enough to choose whatever suits their temperament and to put it into practice for their own future benefit.

Conclusion

The practices described in this book will probably seem difficult to most people, but they were also difficult for those whose stories are related here. They had to put up with many hardships, both in doing the practice and afterwards. For this is the kind of work, which once done is never likely to be forgotten, for the reason that it comes truly from the heart of each one who does it, and it involves a complete commitment of every bit of strength and power that one has got, in every way without any concern for whether one will survive or die while doing the work. One's only concern and intention is to achieve the results that one aims for and therefore there is nothing else which can come in and overrule this concern for Dhamma while one is doing it. There is just this one aim, to attain the results which one hopes for and which one has set one's mind on, and that's all. Therefore there is nothing else that can overpower and take control away from this "hope in Dhamma". When the results come they are appropriate to the causes that have brought them about. In other words they are most satisfying and give no cause for complaint. This is true, regardless of who does it, for whoever is able to get down to it and put the full strength of body and mind down into it until they reach the causes, reach the results, and truly reach the point of life and death will gain these results, and all who have done so have been able to say with one voice that "It's really worth it!" However, we should keep in mind that all the difficulties that have been faced by those who have done this, still do not compare with the hardships and the striving of the Great Teacher (*Sāsadā* — the Buddha). For at most, we may say that they practised in the manner of a pupil who followed his Teacher. In particular I, who have written this book, have got nothing in the way of causes or results which I should put down on paper and display in public, which you who read might admire. So I just ask that you should read the stories of those *Ācariyas* and associates who also practised the way which I have written about, for these stories are enough to show up their good characteristic tendencies. Therefore I implore all of you who read this to both read it and practise it until you get results which are fully satisfying to your hearts. For this would be a fulfilment of my intention and purpose in writing it, which has been to bring value and happiness to everybody.

If anybody out of faith should wish to reprint this book for free distribution as a gift of Dhamma *(Dhamma–dāna),* they may do so provided these conditions are complied with. In which case there is no need to ask permission to do so. But printing this book for sale is not permitted and to do so is an infringement of copyright. This accords with what I have done with other books that I have written, because my aim has been to bring what is of value to the world with purity of heart without becoming involved in worldly entanglements. So I ask you to be considerate and to conform to this request.

May blessings come to all you who read and listen to it, and to all those who practise accordingly.

Appendix

The Five Khandhas

These are made up of body, feeling, memory, thought/imagination, and consciousness. It is difficult to appreciate the depth and subtlety of meaning within these five, and in order to give the reader some basis for contemplation, a list of similes is given. These similes were given by the Buddha and may be found in the section on the *khandhas* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya.*

- The body is likened to a lump of foam floating down the river Ganges.
- Feeling is likened to the rain falling into a puddle of water, and each rain drop as it falls causes a splash and a bubble which quickly bursts and disappears.
- Memory is likened to a mirage seen in the desert. It has no substance to it and is mere appearance.
- Thought and imaginative thinking are like a plantain tree, for if the outer layers of the trunk are peeled off, as one goes inward one comes to no pith or hardwood.
- Consciousness is likened to a magician who goes to the crossroads and displays all sorts of magical phenomena. But when it is done it all disappears and nothing is left of it.

When one talks about the *nāma khandhas,* one tends to think of them as being separate things or entities, but in fact they are all aspects of the *citta.* It is therefore more correct to think in terms of the *citta* performing the functions of feeling, memory, thought, or consciousness, for all of them are thoroughly dynamic and they are not static entities at all.

Memory (Saññā)

It has become popular in many places to translate the word *saññā* by "perception", and this is a wrong translation. It seems probable that this stems

from the translations of parts of the *Ti–piṭaka* in the last century and early in this century by scholars who tried to put Buddhist ideas into Western philosophical concepts. The dictionary (Concise Oxford) gives the meaning of "perceive", as, to apprehend with the mind, observe, understand, etc., or to apprehend through one of the senses. And for "perception" it gives, act, faculty of perceiving, intuitive recognition; (philos) action by which the mind refers its sensations to external object as cause.

All of the above definitions involve all of the mental *khandhas* and are complex processes. But in addition, if *saññā* is not translated as memory, then where is memory in the *khandhas?* Not enough thought has been given to the overwhelming importance of "memory". Surely this should be clear to anyone who understands the devastating effect of Alzheimer's disease in which the memory steadily diminishes until the unfortunate victim has no reference left from past experience and he becomes virtually an imbecile.

Throughout Thailand, *saññā* is always translated by "kwam chum", which just means "memory", and this is universally accepted by both scholars and those who practise the ways of meditation.

Khandha–Vatta (The Groups of Duties)

The list of these duties is given below, but for a complete coverage of them one must consult the books and commentaries on the *Vinaya–piṭaka.*

The relevant duties are to be carried out in the following situations:

1. By a Bhikkhu when he visits a monastery or dwelling place.
2. By a resident Bhikkhu in a monastery or dwelling place.
3. By a Bhikkhu who is leaving a residence.
4. By chanting the thanksgiving after receiving food or other gifts.
5. In the place where food is eaten.
6. During the alms round.
7. By a Bhikkhu dwelling in the forest.
8. In the dwelling place *(senāsana).*
9. In the wash room (lit: fire room).
10. In the toilet place or room.
11. By the preceptor for his follower.

12. By a Bhikkhu for his preceptor.
13. By a teacher *(Ācariya)* for his pupil.
14. By a pupil for his teacher.

The Ascetic Practices (Dhutangas)

These are the ascetic practices as listed in the standard text books. It must be understood that their purpose in every case is to counteract specific defilements *(kilesas).* So they are to be applied by each practitioner as and when he finds need for them.

1. Wearing robes that are patched up and mended.
2. Wearing only the three robes and no others.
3. Getting one's food by going on the alms round *(piṇḍapāta).*
4. Not omitting any house on the alms round.
5. Eating food only once a day, at one sitting.
6. Eating only out of the alms bowl.
7. Having eaten food to one's satisfaction, one refuses any further food.
8. Living in the forest.
9. Living under a tree.
10. Living in the open. Not at the foot of a tree, nor under a roof.
11. Living in a charnel ground.
12. Being satisfied with any bed or resting place that falls to one's lot.
13. The sitter's practice. In other words, sitting, standing or walking, but never lying down.

Saṁyojana

The *saṁyojana* are a list of ten factors that bind people to the endless round of birth and death. They are:

1. *Sakkāya–diṭṭhi:* the belief that there is an entity of self or individuality in the five *khandhas.*

2. *Vicikicchā:* doubt of a sceptical nature based on delusion.
3. *Sīlabbata–parāmāsa:* usually translated as "attachment to rules and rituals". But many who practise the way of Buddhism are not satisfied with this and feel that it concerns morality more than rules and rituals.
4. *Kāma–rāga:* sensuous craving. Although this is a correct translation, amongst those who practise, the main emphasis is on sexual craving and all that proliferates from it.
5. *Vyāpāda:* Ill will, malevolence.
6. *Rūpa–rāga:* the desire for the exalted states of the *rūpa* realms.
7. *Arūpa–rāga:* the desire for the exalted states of the *arūpa* realms.
8. *Māna:* conceit.
9. *Uddhacca:* restlessness.
10. *Avijjā:* blind unknowing.

These ten factors are overcome progressively by the attainment of the four paths, thus: the *Sotāpanna* has overcome the first three. The *Sakadāgāmī* has also reduced the fourth and fifth. The *Anāgāmī* has overcome the first five factors. The *Arahant* has overcome all ten factors.

The Vinaya–Mukha

The *Vinaya–Mukha* (lit: the mouth of the *Vinaya*) is a set of three books which give a concise and fairly complete explanation of the *Vinaya–Piṭaka*. The *Vinaya–Piṭaka* consists of five large volumes in the Pāli text translations and while it is, allowing for inaccuracies, the final authority, it is certainly not concise. So for those who want to get an overview of the *Vinaya,* the *Vinaya–Mukha* offers a useful alternative.

The *Vinaya–Mukha* is translated into English and is available from the Mahāmakuta Buddhist Bookshop (opposite Wat Bovornives Vihāra), Pra Sumeru Road, Bangkok, Thailand.

Ārammaṇa

The word *Ārammaṇa* means: a foundation, support, or that on which something depends. But generally speaking, in this book, this "something" refers to the state of mind and what flows out of it. As a supporting condition for mental states, the *ārammaṇa* may be an externally sensed object or an internal condition arising from feeling, memory, thought or consciousness.

Amongst those who practise the way of "*kammaṭṭhāna*", the word *ārammaṇa* is often used to refer to an emotional mental state, either good or bad, although to be strictly correct it should refer to that which arouses or precipitates that state.

In the Thai language, the word *ārammaṇa,* pronounced "arom", always means "the emotions" and sometimes in this book it also means the emotions.



Glossary

The following is a list of the *Pāli* words as used in the text, together with a brief translation and comment when necessary. The list follows the Roman alphabet for ease of reference.

Ācariya: Teacher. Sometimes also a term of respect for a senior Bhikkhu.

Adinnādāna: Theft, stealing.

Akāliko: Timeless.

Ākāsa: Space, the sky.

Akusala: Bad, demerit, unskilful.

Anāgāmī: Someone who has reached the third stage of the path, the stage before *Arahant*.

Anālaya: Unattached.

Ānāpānasati: Mindfulness of breathing in and out. One of the best known forms of meditation practice.

Anicca: Impermanence, transience, instability.

Anupādisesa: Without remainder. In reference to the *Arahant* after the death of the body.

Anumodanā: Thanksgiving for gifts received by the *Sangha*. Generally in the form of a chant.

Anusāsana: Advice, instruction.

Aṅga: Constituent part, quality.

Appaṇā: To attain, fix the mind upon, attainment in *samādhi*.

Arahant: One who is worthy, one who reached the ultimate state of *Nibbāna*.

Ārammaṇa: Support, a supporting condition for the mind, an object.

Ariya: Noble.

Arūpa: Formless.

Āsava: Outflows. Thus the *citta* flows out into sense desires, into perpetuating existence, into views and opinions, and into ignorance *(avijjā)*.

Asubha: That which is unpleasant, loathsome, contrary to what is usually desired.

Asurakāya: The population of *Asuras.* The *Asuras* are in the realm below the human realm and they consist of warlike beings, constantly at war with the gods.

Atītārammaṇa: Past events as a condition for presently arising states of mind.

Aṭṭhi: Bones.

Avijjā: Ignorance, in the form of blind unknowing.

Avyākata: Not designated.

Āyatana: Sense fields. Thus, the field of seeing, hearing, etc., — mental sensation.

Bhava: Realms of existence.

Bhāva: Becoming, condition, nature.

Bhāvanā: Development by means of meditation.

Bhavaṅga: The continual flow of life and consciousness which continues unknown by normal awareness.

Bhikkhu: A monk, usually in reference to Buddhism. One who lives on donated food.

Bhūmi: The ground, a region, a stage or level of mind.

Bhūta: What has come into existence. A form of ghost.

Brahma: The great god, but in the sense of the Greek gods. E.g. Zeus.

Brahmacariyā: Celibacy and the general training of living the higher life.

Brāhmaṇa: The state of true holiness.

Brahmavihāra: The four states of: *mettā* (friendliness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (gladness at the well being of others), *upekkhā* (equanimity).

Cakka: A wheel, circle.

Caṅkama: To walk back and forth. A walking meditation.

Citta: That underlying essence of mind which manifests as feeling, memory, thought and consciousness. In its pure state it is indefinable and beyond *Saṁsāra.*

Dāna: Giving, making gifts.

Dantā: Teeth.

Dasabalañāṇa: Skill in the ten powers of the Buddha.

Desanā: A talk on Dhamma.

Deva: An angel like being of the *Deva*–realms which are immediately above the human realm.

Devadhītā: A female *Deva.*

Devaputta: Son of a *Deva.*

Dhamma: Truth, the ultimate order underlying everything, the teaching of the Buddha.

Dhammā(s): In the plural, means: objects of mind, concepts, theories.

Dhammārammaṇa: Dhamma as the object or support of the mind and mental states.

Dhātu: Element. Thus, the four elements of earth, water, fire and air; and the sense organs such as the eye, ear, nose, etc.

Dhutanga: Ascetic practices. See Appendix on page 569.

Diṭṭhi: Views, opinions.

Dukkha: Discontent, suffering.

Ekībhāva: Unity, solitude, loneliness.

Garuḍa: A mythical bird, half human and half bird.

Gāthā: A verse, stanza, or line of poetry.

Guṇa: Virtue, quality.

Guru: Teacher.

Hetu: Cause, reason.

Hiri: Sense of shame.

Indra: One of the chief Indian deities.

Jīnāsava: Destruction of the *āsavas* as in the *Arahant.*

Jhāna: Various states of meditative absorption, including the four *rūpa* and the four *arūpa–jhānas.*

Kalyāṇa: Morally good, virtuous.

Kamma: Lit: "action". But in Buddhism, action of the body, speech or mind which has a moral content of good, bad or neutral. Such action brings back a corresponding result.

Kammaṭṭhāna: Lit: "*Kamma* = action, *ṭhāna* = a region or place." For more on this word, see the beginning of this book.

Karuṇā: Compassion.

Kāya: A heap, collection, the physical body.

Kāyagata: Relating to the body.

Kāyānupassanā: Contemplation of the body.

Kesa: Hair of the head.

Khandha: A heap, but usually referring to the five *khandhas,* these being, the body, feeling, memory, thought/imagination, and consciousness.

Khīṇāsava: One who has destroyed the *āsavas.* A term for the Buddha and the *Arahants.*

Kilesa: The defilements based upon greed, hate, and delusion.

Kusala: Good, virtuous, skilful.

Lābha: Gain, acquisition.

Lakkhaṇa: A characteristic mark. Thus, the three *lakkhaṇa* are impermanence, suffering, and "non-self".

Lobha: Greed.

Loka: The world.

Lokāmisa: Carnal worldliness.

Lokavidū: One who sees and knows the worlds.

Lokuttara: Beyond the relative conventions of the world.

Loma: Hair of the body.

Maccu–rāja: The king of death.

Magga: Path. Usually referring to the eight fold path leading to *Nibbāna.*

Mahā: Great, superior. In Thailand, a degree in *Pāli* studies.

Mahanta: Great, big.

Māna: Conceit.

Māra: The evil one, the devil, sometimes plural.

Mātika: Table of contents.

Māyā: Fraud, deceit, illusion.

Mettā: Friendliness; pure love.

Micchādiṭṭhi: Wrong and false views and opinions.

Moha: Delusion.

Muditā: Gladness in the well being and gains of other people.

Musāvāda: Lying and falsehood.

Nāga: The serpent kings who live in a realm that is non-physical.

Nakhā: Nails of the hands and feet.

Nāma: Name. The four mental factors of the five *khandhas.*

Ñāṇa: Knowing, instinctive knowing intuitive knowing.

Nibbāna: The ultimate goal of Buddhist training. Lit: "Extinguished".

Nimitta: A sign. In meditation practice, a mental image which is usually visual.

Nirodha: Cessation.

Nirujjhati: To cease, dissolve or vanish.

Niyyānika: Leading out of.

Opanayika: Leading to, bringing near to.

Ottappa: Shrinking back from doing what is wrong.

Ovāda: Advice, instruction.

Paccaya: Condition, cause, requisite. Donations of requisites given to the Bhikkhus.

Paccayākāra: The *Paṭiccasamuppāda,* the twelve conditions leading to birth and suffering.

Paccuppanna: The present time.

Pamāda: Negligence; indolence.

Paṁsukūla: Rag robes made up of cloth from the rubbish heap.

Pāṇātipāta: To kill living beings.

Pañcavaggīya: The five recluses who were the first to be taught by the Buddha.

Paññā: Wisdom.

Paracittavijjā: Supernormal powers.

Parama: Superior.

Paramaṁsukhaṁ: The greatest happiness.

Pāramī: Perfection, perfect fulfilment.

Paribbājaka: A wandering religious mendicant.

Parikamma: Preparatory practice. Preparatory meditation.

Parinibbāna: Final *Nibbāna* attained at the death of the Buddha or any of the *Arahants.*

Paṭibhāga: The *Nimitta* (q.v.) which arises in the deepest level of *samādhi.*

Paṭiccasamuppāda: See: *Paccayākāra.*

Paṭikūla: Loathsome, disagreeable.

Paṭimokkha: The 227 rules for Bhikkhus which are recited every fortnight.

Paṭipadā: Practice, mode of conduct.

Paṭisandhi: The "relinking" consciousness which links the past life to the next life.

Phala: Fruition, result.

Phassa: Touch, contact.

Piṇḍapāta: Walking on the alms round.

Pīti: Enthusiasm, rapture, joy, delight.

Preta: (*Peta* in *Pāli*); The dead, departed, a ghost.

Pubbenivāsa: One's former lives.

Puggala: A person.

Pūjā: Homage, devotion.

Puññā: Merit, righteousness.

Puthujjana: The ordinary worldly person without any special Dhamma attainment.

Rāga: Lust, attachment.

Rishi: (Sanskrit) A non-Buddhist ascetic.

Rukkhamūla: Dwelling at the foot of a tree.

Rūpa: Form, shape, the body.

Sabhāva: Nature, a thing in itself, condition.

Sabong: The Bhikkhu's inner robe. The "skirt" robe.

Sacca: Truth.

Saddhā: Faith.

Sadhamma: The true doctrine.

Sādhu: Reverential assent, much like "Amen" which comes from ancient Egypt.

Sakadāgāmī: The second of the four stages culminating in *Arahant*.

Sakkāya: This present body.

Sākya: The race of people from whom the Buddha came.

Sālā: A meeting hall.

Samādhi: Absorbed concentration which has many levels and kinds.

Samaṇa: A recluse.

Sāmaṇera: A novice.

Samāpatti: Attainment of various levels of mind.

Samatha: Calm.

Sāmīci: The right way, proper way.

Sammā: Right, correct.

Sammodanīya: To be rejoiced, pleasant.

Sammuti: Conventional, common consent, accepted opinion.

Sampajañña: Comprehension.

Saṁsāra: The total sphere of all the realms of existence.

Samuccheda–pahāna: Letting go by cutting off attachments.

Samudaya: Uprising. *Samudaya–sacca* is the truth of the uprising of suffering.

Sandiṭṭhiko: To be seen, that which can be seen.

Sangāha: A collection, compilation.

Sangha: A group of at least four Bhikkhus, the order of Bhikkhus.

Saṅghāṭi: The Bhikkhus outer robe.

Saṅkappa: Purpose, aim.

Sankhāra: 1.) The group of parts that make up anything. 2.) That which puts together the parts that make up anything.

Saññā: Memory.

Santi: Peace, calmness, tranquillity.

Sāra: Essence, that which is not impermanent.

Sāraguṇa: The essential quality.

Saraṇa: A refuge.

Sāsadā: The world teacher, the supreme teacher, the Buddha as a teacher.

Sāsana: A religion, a system of teaching and training.

Sati: Mindfulness.

Satipaṭṭhāna: The practice and method of developing mindfulness.

Saupādisesa: With remainder. In reference to the *Arahant* who attains *Nibbāna* and lives for a time. Remainder means the body and mind which still remains.

Sāvaka: A hearer (of the teaching). Usually in reference to those who heard the teaching directly from the Buddha.

Senāsana: A seat, a dwelling place for a Bhikkhu.

Seyyāsana: A bed, couch.

Sīha: A lion.

Sīla: Morality, moral behaviour.

Siri–maṅgala: Luck, glory, splendour, a blessing.

Sobhaṇa: Shining, beautiful, the virtuous states of mind.

Sotāpanna: One who has entered the stream leading to *Nibbāna.* The first of the four stages culminating in *Nibbāna.*

Subha: Auspicious, often used in reference to the perception of the beautiful.

Sugato: The happy one, a term for the Buddha.

Sukha: The pleasant, happy, contented.

Sutta: A thread, the discourses of the Buddha.

Svākkhāto: Well taught.

Taco: Skin.

Taṇhā: Craving, including: greed, hate and delusion.

Tathāgata: The "Thus gone", a title for the Buddha.

Tāvatiṁsa: The name of a heavenly abode.

Thera: An elder, a Bhikkhu who has been in the *Sangha* for ten or more years.

Theravada: "The ways of the Elder." The southern school of Buddhism as found in Thailand, Sri–Lanka (Ceylon) and Burma.

Ti–lakkhaṇa: The three characteristics, these being: impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

Ti–loka–dhātu: The three worlds, the universe.

Ti–piṭaka: The three baskets, meaning the three groups of books making up the Buddhist canon.

Uggaha: Learning. The name of the image *(nimitta)* that arises in the second stage of *samādhi.*

Upācāra: Approach, access. The name of the second stage of *samādhi.*

Upādāna: Attachment, clinging.

Upajjhāya: The Bhikkhu who presides over the ordination of a Bhikkhu.

Upanissaya: Basis, support, those good characteristics that enable someone to recognise Dhamma, to take it up and gain from it.

Upasagga: A danger, obstacle.

Upāsaka: A white robed male devotee.

Upāsikā: A white robed female devotee.

Upekkhā: Neutrality, equanimity, indifference.

Vāsanā: Impressions and tendencies from the past.

Vassa: The rains period, three months, approximately July to October when the Bhikkhus are limited to staying in a single residence.

Vaṭṭa: Circular, a round, cycle.

Vatthu: A site, ground, field, a thing.

Vedanā: Feeling.

Veneyya: One who is open to receiving instruction.

Vibhava: In *vibhava–taṇhā:* wanting to change, to become something different.

Vicāraṇāñāṇa: Insight wisdom based on investigation.

Vicāraṇā: Investigation.

Vihāra: A dwelling place.

Vimutti: Freedom.

Vimuttiñāṇadassana: Knowing and seeing the state of freedom.

Vinaya: The Bhikkhu's rules and the books containing them.

Visuddhi: Purity.

Vitakka: Thought.

Vijjā: Knowing, in contrast to *avijjā* (ignorance).

Vivaṭṭa: Devolution, against the round of rebirth.

Yakkha: A giant, ogre.

Yama: The lord of death.

Yathābhūtañāṇadassana: Seeing with insight into things as they really are.

Yathākamma: In accordance with one's actions *(kamma).*

Yogāvacara: One who trains in meditation practice.

Yoniso: Wisely, judiciously.



"Over on that hill, in that cave, or under that overhanging cliff the air is good, it is right for meditation and the heart can easily become concentrated and drop into a state of calm. Those large trees over there are thick with leaves, shady and peaceful, suitable for the practice of meditation. The weather is good and the place is free from the disturbance and confusion of the world. Those hills are places where your eyes and ears will open in the joy of Dhamma. They are all good places to stay and develop the practice and search for peace and happiness of heart. In those wild forests you will be able to get rid of all kinds of laziness and fear. A lazy or timid person should go and live in such a place, for it will help him to develop effort and diligence and also to overcome his fear so that he becomes more courageous and bold, relieving the load and pressure on his heart, which has become too heavy."

-Ācariya Mun-

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